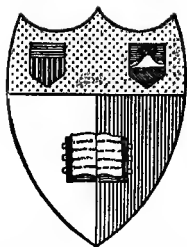


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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

1789—1795

BY

J. E. SYMES, M.A.

Principal of University College, Nottingham

WITH MAP OF FRANCE

Methuen & Co.

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1892

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PREFACE.

THE French Revolution may be studied from many different sides. It may be viewed as a succession of thrilling incidents, or as the attempt to realize certain ideals, or as a portion of the International History of Europe, or as the destruction of mediæval institutions, or as a series of political and social experiments.

I have tried, in this book, to combine these points of view so far as seemed practicable in the space at my disposal. This has, of course, necessitated a rigorous exclusion of all minor incidents, and even of many that were by no means unimportant. My object has been not so much to record facts, as to arrange them in such a way as shall bring out their significance, and especially their relation to the problems of our own time. I have even ventured in a brief concluding chapter to point out what seem to me the chief lessons taught by the Revolution.

It is scarcely necessary to say that much caution should be used, when applying such lessons to particular circumstances. Yet such applications have to be made. We rightly expect the history of the past to throw light on the questions of the present. This light cannot safely be neglected by those wishing to form sound political judgments.

A little knowledge may be dangerous, but complete ignorance is more dangerous still.

Readers who wish to study the period more fully will find sympathetic accounts of the Revolution in the eloquent, suggestive, but sometimes inaccurate works of Louis Blanc, Michelet, and Lamartine. Of the anti-revolutionary histories those of Taine and Von Sybel will be found the most useful. Carlyle is incomparable for vividness and energy. But he almost ignores the industrial and economic significance of the Revolution ; and his contempt for abstract theories and constitutional discussions is likely to make his readers undervalue some important aspects of the period.

Of the many valuable books connected with the French Revolution, it must suffice to mention a few. I only insert the price and publisher where there is an English edition not out of print.

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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE fundamental causes of the French Revolution may be summed up very briefly. They were : the misery of the people ; the badness of the Government ; and the influence of the leading eighteenth century writers. Let us look then more closely into each of these three causes.

There has undoubtedly been much exaggeration in the accounts that have been given of the misery of the French people. In the years preceding the Revolution, they were probably less miserable than the Germans during the same period. Their material condition was almost certainly better than that of their fathers and of their grandfathers. It is difficult to make comparisons in this matter ; but the evidence at our disposal seems conclusively to prove that the people of France were nearer to the starvation point in the half century beginning 1690, than in that immediately before the Revolution.¹ But if comparisons are difficult,

¹ In 1698 the official reports of the Intendants assert that the population had diminished by one-third, or even one-half in many districts. The total population of France further diminished by about one-ninth

they are also of small importance. Whether more or less prevalent than at other periods, there can be no doubt that hunger and rags were important factors in bringing about the Revolution. It is idle to point to men and women who have been more hungry and more ragged, and yet have not revolted. Other forces were necessary, but without this one there would have been no Revolution. In 1784 we find an Intendant reports "whole families two days without food ; the hungry lie in bed most of the day to diminish their sufferings." Another reports that women are burning their wooden bedsteads and their fruit trees for fuel. Moreover in 1789 there was, no doubt, exceptional distress. The harvest of 1788 suffered severely from a dry summer, followed by frightful hailstorms. Then came a winter more severe than had been known since 1709. The frost destroyed a large part of the olive and chestnut trees ; besides aggravating in other ways the sufferings of the poor in this particular year.

One great cause of the habitual misery was the burden of taxation. This connects the first with the second of our fundamental causes of the French Revolution. The badness of the fiscal system under the old régime was largely due to the iniquitous exemptions, which made the taxes fall chiefly on the poor ; but even apart from this, the whole

(from nineteen to seventeen millions) between 1698 and 1715. Then the falling off was checked, but in 1753 the total population was still only seventeen and a half millions. There seems no reasonable doubt that penury and starvation were among the chief causes of the diminution, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the subsequent slight increase implies some improvement in material conditions. The rapid increase in foreign trade between 1720 and 1788 points in the same direction.

system of taxation was irrational in the extreme. The property tax (*taille*) rose with every improvement a tenant made, and absorbed a large proportion of any addition to the produce. The rest would be swallowed up by other legal or illegal exactions. Industry and thrift were directly discouraged. As Rousseau puts it—"It was ruin to a peasant to be suspected not to be on the verge of starvation." Any wealth he had was liable to be heavily taxed. The tax on salt (*gabelle*) produced every year three thousand four hundred imprisonments. The duty on wine was so heavy that we read of peasants pouring the whole produce of their vines into the river, from sheer inability to pay the tax demanded of them.

We cannot wonder that fields went out of cultivation, and that agriculturalists fled from the tax-gatherer to Paris, preferring a casual livelihood, picked up as hangers-on of the rich, as thieves or beggars, to the certainty of penury, accompanied by incessant and monotonous labour, in the country. Among other hardships, we may notice all sorts of antiquated trade regulations and impediments to the transfer of goods and of labour, from where the goods and labour were not wanted to places where they could secure a better price. Some of these regulations and impediments were relics of mediæval feudalism, others were the remains of Colbert's elaborate attempts to organize and protect French industries. In every direction there were barriers to the free circulation of goods and of labourers—barriers partly due to mistaken theories, but partly deliberate means for extracting money from the workers for the benefit of the privileged.

And indeed the one word 'privileges' includes a very considerable proportion of the ills from which France was

suffering. There were privileges of the clergy, and privileges of the nobility, and privileges that had been created to be sold. The one thing common to all privileges was that they benefited the classes at the expense of the masses. It had not always been so. Originally the clergy, the nobles, and the king had all rendered services for which their privileges had perhaps been no excessive remuneration. It is difficult to exaggerate the services which the Church had rendered to France, and indeed to Europe, for twelve centuries. She had been the builder-up of civilization and education, the guardian of morality and literature, the sustainer of the weak, the check on the strong. When unable to prevent wrong, she had deprived it of half its sting by the images and ideals with which she nourished men's spirits. Whether she was trying to establish a kingdom of God upon earth, or pointing to such a kingdom in the future, or to that kingdom of God which is within us, her services had been almost priceless. Otherwise we may be sure that she would never have received such wealth and such privileges. These were in some sense the measure of her services, but the privileges remained when the services were no longer rendered ; when the leaders of the church were infidels at heart, allied with the secular oppressors of the people, living, many of them, in idleness, luxury, and vice.

And as with the clergy, so was it also with the nobility. Their privileges had originally represented work done for the community. Feudalism had been essentially a system of reciprocal services, under which the lord gave a real protection to his tenant, and did not merely draw a rent from him. And in France feudalism had been perhaps more useful than in any other part of Europe. During the

miserable centuries that had followed the death of Charles the Great, the whole land seemed given up to violence, disorder and brigandage. By brute force men pushed their way to the front, till stronger men than they appeared and took their place. But gradually out of the struggle for existence emerged those whose fitness lay not merely in brute strength, but in some capacity for organization and administration—men who could defend themselves and others, but who were nevertheless no mere fighters—whose greed was not insatiable, and who had other ambitions than that of destroying their enemies. These men were the founders of the French nobility. Rude, cruel, and stern, they did what priests, and monks, and saints could not have done. They established some sort of order, and maintained it by the sword. And in return for these services they got privileges. They taxed their poorer neighbours, and made them work without wages. They monopolized the hunting and various other forms of profit and amusement. The tenant was forced to grind his corn at his lord's will, and to press his grapes in the lord's winepress.

But when we remember that these men, besides acting as protectors, were the landlords and only capitalists of the time, while they got little of what we should call rent or interest, we shall scarcely regard their privileges as excessive. The best of them co-operated with the clergy. The men of the sword often quarrelled with the men of the pen; yet, in the main, they were working together for the establishment of law and order in the community, and the natural result was that these two classes became the two ruling estates of France, exercising jurisdiction over the masses, over the Third Estate, who, but for their firm hand, would have been mere fragments, but whom the privileged classes had built

up into some sort of solidarity. In theory there was a King of France ; but as a matter of fact he was only one of the nobles, nominally the head of the order, but in reality often weaker than some of those who called themselves his subjects.

Feudalism did its work, and was aided by Catholicism. Sons inherited their fathers' fiefs, but not always their fathers' abilities and characters. The protection they afforded to their tenants was often merely a form of plunder, though even this was generally preferable to being at the mercy of any brigand chief who might pass that way. The interest of the lords in the property of those under them was generally too evident to be altogether ignored ; but the rivalries of neighbouring barons were a perpetual element of disorder, and a perpetual source of weakness. The wars with England convinced all intelligent Frenchmen of the evils of disunion ; and the only means of escape from it seemed to be by strengthening the authority of the King. The towns, the traders, even the peasants, looked to him to protect them from the tyrant at their doors ; and meanwhile the royal dominions were being increased by marriage and by conquest, by intrigue and by inheritance.

Thus the independence of the great feudal lords was gradually shattered. They ceased to be sovereigns, and became merely courtiers, or officers of the King. In every district a royal official (the *Intendant*) now represented the King's authority ; and the conscription provided materials for a national army. The chief national industries were organized under Colbert. France became a despotism, but the power and privileges of the King, like those of the clergy and nobles, were for long not altogether disproportionate to the services rendered to the community. He

was in a real sense a redresser of wrongs, a protector of the people against foreign and domestic dangers. At least, he served as an ideal centre for feelings of loyalty and patriotism. Very wonderful was the patience of the French people, their belief that if only the King knew of their wrongs he would provide a remedy ; and we may be sure that such sentiments would never have grown up, had they never had a seed of truth in them.

But of clergy, nobles, and King alike, we may say that in the eighteenth century their privileges had become utterly disproportionate to their services¹ ; that their authority now rested either on force or on sentiments no

¹ The population of France since the annexation of Lorraine amounted to over twenty millions. There were thirty thousand noble families, containing in all about one hundred and forty thousand persons. There were sixty thousand parish priests, and about as many monks and nuns. Thus the privileged were about one-eightieth part of the nation.

Of the land of France about one-fifth belonged to the King or to the Communes, another fifth to the nobles, another to the clergy. Two-fifths remain for the middle and lower classes, and their land was generally the poorest. Upon this portion was levied almost the whole of the *taille*, the chief direct tax of France. And with other direct taxation, it was much the same. The nobles and clergy were in some cases legally exempt, and in others they took advantage of their position to evade paying their full share. In one case, for instance, it has been proved that the princes of the Royal Family paid less than two hundred thousand *livres*, instead of two and a half millions, which was due from them. "I pay pretty much what I please," said the Duke of Orleans—Equality Philip, as he was called, when he professed to become a democrat. His annual income was about twelve million *livres* ! It must however be noticed that the privileges of the upper classes were less in France than in Germany ; and that though in England there was nothing corresponding to the *Corvée* (compulsory labour), yet the English people were even more completely without rights over the land.

longer rooted in fact ; and that the people were beginning to discern this. The whole spirit of the eighteenth century was opposed to privilege and loyalty. A rationalism, often shallow enough, was dissolving all existing reverences and superstitions ; while new ideas, as to the nobility and the rights of men, were suggesting the overthrow of existing authority, and inviting efforts to reorganize society upon a new basis. We should better understand the eighteenth century spirit if we study, however briefly, the writers in whom it found the most powerful expression.

Voltaire was the intellectual forerunner of the critical and destructive side of the French Revolution. He represents its scepticism, its hatred of the Church, and its contempt for authority. He was far enough himself from being a Revolutionist. His language towards kings was often servile. He looked to them to promote those reforms on which his heart was set. And those reforms might almost be summed up in the words—liberty of thought and action. Voltaire had few illusions, and his estimate of human nature was not high. He had no wish to deprive kings of their power, if they would use it well, and specially if they would establish religious toleration, restrain the bigotry of the priests, and abolish the more flagrant abuses in the State. But though not revolutionary in his aims, Voltaire was so in spirit ; nor could he prevent readers from applying to the political world those critical and destructive methods which he himself employed in the sphere of religion. Governments are held together largely by customs, traditions, prejudices, and sentiments, of which the rational grounds are not easily seen. Voltaire's spirit would help no one to discover the hidden justifications for inherited instincts and conventional judgments. Only the irrational and absurd sides of these

things presented themselves to his mental vision. He undermined respect for authority, partly by the sceptical spirit in which he often wrote, but partly, also, by the zeal with which he hunts for and denounces abuses. He seems to feel, in his own person, all that the martyrs of free thought have suffered in the past. Enthusiasm alternates with sarcasm, and when he laughs it is often that he may not weep.

If Voltaire foreshadowed the destructive side of the French Revolution, Jean Jacques Rousseau was the evangelist of its constructive ideals. His system of political philosophy is full of contradictions, disfigured by sentimentality, opposed to history, and untrue to facts. But it glows with a fine enthusiasm; and it greatly helped forward the Revolution. His first notable work was a Prize Essay, written in 1750, on the question whether the progress of arts and sciences has been favourable to morality. Rousseau answered this question in the negative. His doctrine that man is good by nature, but corrupted by civilization, was flung upon a society weary of conventionalities and etiquette, eager for paradox and novelty. Fine ladies and gentlemen had only to look around them to see the evils of an artificial civilization; but they mostly cared less about what they might see, than about what they might say. Rousseau's doctrine was admirable for conversational purposes. It lent itself to epigram, and so became fashionable; and, as its corollary, polite society took to glorifying the simple natural life of the poor, in contrast to that of courts and *salons*. The same doctrine was expanded in the *Essay on Inequality* (1753), which closes with the words:—"It is clearly contrary to the law of nature that a handful of people should abound

in superfluities, while a famishing multitude is without necessaries."

In 1760 appeared *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, a novel told in the form of letters, brimful of exaggerated emotion, glorifying nature and the natural affections. This book had an immense effect. Ladies began to wear simple dresses, *à la Rousseau*, to indulge in rustic amusements, and to try domestic life. Fashionable wives took to seeing something of their husbands, and even to nursing their own babies; and the talk about the virtues and wrongs of the poor grew apace. In the *Contrat Social* (1762) Rousseau passes from social to political questions. Like Hobbes and Locke, he regards political societies as founded upon a contract. Like Hobbes, he holds that this contract involves a surrender of individual rights; but according to Rousseau, each man surrenders his liberty, not to a ruler, but to all men. In other words, the social contract implies the sovereignty of the people. The Government is but an intermediary between the sovereign people and individual citizens; and as far as possible everything should be done by the direct action of the whole people. In fact, laws not directly sanctioned by the people are null and void. All this seems harmless enough as speculation. But we shall see that the attempt to translate the social contract into an actual workable constitution for France was fraught with serious consequences.

For the present we will only notice that Rousseau's democratic opinions, like his attacks on civilization, and his sentimental enthusiasm for humanity, for nature, and the family bonds, were fashionable in polite society long before they filtered down to the mob, through newspapers, speeches and pamphlets. Napoleon has said that without Rousseau there would have been no Revolution; and un-

doubtedly, the sympathies which Rousseau evoked contributed more to the great movement than even the awakening of the Voltairean spirit. Voltaire taught men to mock at the past, and to execrate the present; but Rousseau pointed to the future, and led the imagination of his readers towards a promised land, that must be reached by a road well worth travelling, arduous and blood-stained though the road might be.

Other writers contributed their quota. *Montesquieu* may be regarded as the intellectual forerunner of the more moderate revolutionists. He taught Frenchmen to admire the English Constitution, and we shall presently see what earnest attempts were made to transform the French Government into something like our own. But to make such a change involved a Revolution.

The *Encyclopædists*, on the other hand, represent a more extreme opposition to accepted views than either Voltaire or Rousseau. The latter were both of them Deists, but the leading writers of the *Encyclopædia* were atheists or pantheists, and the ablest of them were materialists.

The *Economists* again were Revolutionists of a sort. As advocates of Free Trade, they were practically demanding a complete overthrow of the existing industrial system. Their cry was "*Laissez faire*"—Let men make what they please, and in what manner they please; "*Laissez aller*"—Let men go where they will, without let or hindrance. Their views were thus the direct opposite to those of Rousseau. His doctrine of the sovereign people would lead naturally to Socialism. They were inculcating an extreme form of Individualism. But for the present socialistic and individualistic opinions were working together for the Revolution.

As yet there was no attempt to translate the eighteenth century ideas into facts. The life of the upper classes was still occupied by frivolous amusements and childish etiquette. Nothing could exceed the polish and brilliancy of French society. The aristocracy spent their time in amusing themselves, and were none the less burdensome to the people, because their amusements had taken an intellectual turn. Vice flourished as much as ever, and was now not merely tolerated, but defended on philosophic grounds. One philosopher had disproved the existence of a Deity. Another had disproved the existence of the soul of man. A third had disproved the existence of absolute moral laws. Such doctrines were naturally acceptable to those who chafed against all restraint. Libertines easily turned atheistic and materialistic views to their own justification, and were ready to demonstrate that morality, religion and law were all founded on exploded superstitions. As early as 1765, Horace Walpole was assured by a lady to whom he was talking that Voltaire was a bigot, inasmuch as he believed in a God.

We have spoken at some length of the fundamental causes of the Revolution, and must leave for a future chapter the events which immediately led to the great change. Of these the most important were: the financial difficulties of the Government; the quarrel between England and her American colonies; the quarrel between the French Government and the privileged classes, which resulted in the convocation of the States-General; the exceptional distress which prevailed during the winter of 1788-9; the disorganization of the army; and the general weakening of authority in France.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRELUDE TO THE REVOLUTION.

DURING the early years of the reign of Louis XVI. the Government was greatly embarrassed by its financial position. There was also a genuine desire to abolish many of the existing abuses, which were indeed the chief ultimate cause of the financial difficulties, and to which the Economists and other writers had called attention.

The young King was sincerely anxious to ameliorate the condition of the people ; and the management of finances was early entrusted to Turgot, a zealous reformer (1774). His comprehensive proposals may be summed up under four heads, viz. :—Freedom of Domestic Industries ; Representative Institutions ; National Education ; and Religious Liberty. Under the first of these heads we include proposals to abolish forced labour ; to break down those barriers between provinces, which prevented the free circulation of labour and goods ; to sweep away the privileges of corporations and trade guilds, and all the old attempts to organize and control the national industries. All these reforms were eminently desirable. Whatever may be said for Colbert's efforts for the state organization of labour, these could only have been beneficial if there was a high standard of ability and public spirit among the

officials. But in old France, every branch of the public service was tainted with inefficiency and corruption. What else could be expected when many of the offices had originally been bought, and were now hereditary. *Laissez-faire* was at least preferable to mismanagement ; but Turgot's proposals naturally roused opposition among those who benefited by existing evils. Men realized more clearly what they would suffer from the loss of privileges, than what they would gain by the removal of the privileges of other people. In this branch of his policy, Turgot represented the Economists.¹

Under the head of taxation, the essential need of France was the abolition of the exemptions enjoyed by the privileged classes. Turgot proposed to throw almost the whole burden of taxation upon the landowners. Like most of the Economists, he disliked indirect taxation, and also all taxes that fall upon labour or capital. If these were all to be dispensed with, there would then only remain the land to be taxed. Turgot therefore advocated what we may call a single tax policy. This naturally enraged and alarmed the nobles and clergy, whose land had hitherto been practically free from all taxation.

The next branch of Turgot's proposals aimed at the establishment of representative councils in all parts of the country. Concerning this, we will only notice that the suffrage was to be confined to land-owners, but that this would include two out of every three adult Frenchmen ; since the peasant proprietors would enjoy the suffrage, even though they held their land subject to various payments and other obligations.

¹ It is worth noting that Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* appeared in 1776, the year of Turgot's dismissal.

In Education, Turgot proposed to break down the clerical monopoly. Lay teachers were to be sent into every town and village. They were to be specially charged to instruct children in the duties of citizenship. Lastly, he wished to see complete religious toleration established in France, especially for the Protestants.

This brief sketch will suffice to explain the description of Turgot as a man "with a whole pacific French Revolution in his head." But his proposals naturally roused the fiercest opposition from the clergy and nobles and the rest of the privileged. The King yielded before the storm, and Turgot was dismissed. It was but a few months since Louis had said that only Turgot and he cared for the people.

The King's wish for reform was no pretence. He soon entrusted the control of the finances to another reforming minister, a man named Necker, who had risen from the position of a bank clerk, and was quite as anxious as Turgot himself to diminish the burdens of the poor. But Necker's ideas of reform were quite different from those of Turgot. The latter was, as we have seen, an economist of the dominant school, an individualist, and a believer in *Laissez-faire*. Necker, on the other hand, inclined towards socialism, and was anxious to improve, rather than to sweep away, the existing organization of labour. But he was too irresolute, and too anxious for popularity with the governing classes, as well as with the governed masses, to put his ideas into practice. His efforts were chiefly directed towards economy, towards the cutting down of wasteful expenditure, and especially towards the abolition of useless offices, many of which had been created only to be sold. But the condition of affairs was too serious to be remedied

by any mere tinkering ; and the outbreak of a war with England (1778) destroyed whatever chance there had been of balancing the national accounts. Both King and minister had tried to maintain peace ; but to the natural hatred of England, and the tempting chance of avenging old humiliations, was added a warm sympathy on the part of French Liberals with our revolted American colonists. It was an excellent opportunity for showing the genuineness of the revolutionary principles which many of the upper classes had professed. The Marquis of Lafayette fitted out a ship at his own expense, and crossed the Atlantic. Other volunteers followed this example, and at length the government yielded to the pressure of opinion in favour of war. This course of action helped naturally to stimulate revolutionary fervour, and the popularity of Rousseau's doctrines about the rights of man, which fitted in so well with the American rebellion ; and it also aggravated the financial difficulties of the government. Necker had to borrow large sums, to meet the deficit ; and in order to be better able to do this, he published what pretended to be a detailed Budget. He did not dare to reveal the whole truth ; but he revealed enough to show that the national funds had been scandalously misapplied. Figures were now provided for those who were anxious to show what large sums were being extracted from the people, and squandered by their rulers.

Necker's budget under-estimated the abuses ; but it made it quite clear that the privileged enjoyed disgraceful exemptions from taxation, while consuming a quite disproportionate amount of the national income ; and that in spite of heavy taxes paid by the poor, there was an immense annual deficit. Necker was already hated by the

courtiers, chiefly for his energetic suppression of useless offices. He was now accused of adding to the national discontent by his financial statement. Like Turgot, he was forced to resign, and the King, acting under the advice of his wife, entrusted his most important office to a brilliant but frivolous courtier, named Calonne. This minister seems to have held the not uncommon notion that extravagant expenditure was good for trade, and he reversed Necker's economical policy. The National Debt increased rapidly, though peace had now been restored, and Calonne tried to pay the interest on each loan by fresh borrowing. It is no slight proof of his plausible ingenuity, that he was able for some time (1783-7) to carry out this ruinous policy of extravagance, and even to extract some fresh supplies from the already overburdened taxpayers. But all resources were at length exhausted. Capitalists refused to go on lending, and taxpayers could pay no more taxes, so Calonne fell back upon Turgot's plan of raising money from the privileged classes. He had the fatuity to suppose that he could persuade these to see the necessity of such a policy. His earlier extravagances had made him popular with queen and court; and he trusted that his popularity and plausibility would enable him to carry through what Turgot had vainly proposed. Accordingly the leading men (*Notables*) were assembled, and Calonne unfolded the position of affairs to them, or at least so much of it as he thought well to mention. But the *Notables* could not be persuaded to tax themselves, even by the eloquence of Calonne. A contemporary cartoon wittily described the situation. A rustic (Calonne) has assembled his poultry, to ask them with what sauce they will be cooked. A bird replies, "We don't want to be cooked." To this the rustic answers,

"You are wandering from the question." To be laughed at is fatal in France, and the Notables persisted in wandering from the question, as to what sort of tax they will be taxed with. They were accustomed to levy taxes, not to pay them.

Another finance minister, Loménie de Brienne, was now tried (1787). Like Calonne, he must be regarded as the Queen's nominee. When he was suggested for the vacant Archbishopric of Toulouse, Louis had said: "Let us have an Archbishop who at least believes in God." But Marie Antoinette was now the real sovereign, and her husband's objections to a prelate who was suspected of atheism were overruled. De Brienne had been one of Calonne's chief opponents, but things had now reached such a pass that the taxing of the privileged was the only possible way of delaying national bankruptcy. Brienne could only adopt Calonne's policy with some slight modifications; but he tried to carry it through without the aid of the Notables, and he soon found himself involved in a quarrel with the Parliament of Paris.

The *Parliaments* of the old France were judicial and administrative, but not legislative bodies. They may be regarded as representing the lawyers and officials who formed a sort of inferior aristocracy or privileged class, the holders of offices which had originally been obtained by purchase, and were now hereditary. The Parliaments consisted partly of feudal nobles, but chiefly of these newer plutocratic nobles; and the hereditary character of both these classes made them to some extent independent of the government. The Parliament of Paris was the most important of the fifteen Parliaments. At the time of the death of Louis XIV., this Parliament was able to set aside the royal testament. All changes in the laws of France

had to be registered by them ; but they were bound to obey the King's personal commands, if these were given at one of the sittings known as *lots de justice*. This was the body which tried to block the policy of Louis and Loménie. They refused to register the tax by which it was proposed to draw money from the privileged classes, and, absurdly enough, they were supported in their opposition by popular opinion. They were merely trying to retain preposterous privileges ; but authority had fallen into discredit, and to oppose the Government was a sufficient passport to popularity. Vainly the King held a *lit de justice*, and then exiled the Parliament for refusing obedience. The obstinacy of the lawyers compelled the Government at length to repudiate its pecuniary obligations, and practically to acknowledge itself bankrupt. But still the selfish Parliament found itself regarded as a champion of liberal principles. And, curiously enough, it ultimately became so ; for, finding its powers of obstruction nearly exhausted, it at length declared that no power could impose a tax without the assent of the *States-General*, the representative Assembly of France. The cry for States-General soon became the watchword of every section of the opposition. The privileged, and those who were suffering from their privileges, the reformers (individualistic and socialistic), the hereditary officials, and those who wanted to turn them out, the lovers of novelty, the Anglo-maniacs and the Americano-maniacs, were all attracted by the same cry ; and at length, the Government determined to concede the demand, partly from mere weakness, partly from a genuine desire for reform, and partly in the hope that they might secure, through the States-General, some new taxes to meet their pecuniary needs.

The States-General were the representatives of the three

estates of the realm—nobles, clergy, and commons. They thus corresponded to the English Parliament of the time of Edward I. ; except that in the latter the peers had no representative character, while in France the nobles, like the other estates, were to elect representatives. In England, Parliament had long ceased to consist of three distinct orders. Two houses, one of which was composed of peers and prelates, while the other represented the commons and inferior clergy, had taken the place of the three estates. In France the States-General had so seldom been convoked, since the days when men troubled themselves little about constitutional forms, that it was difficult to say to what organization precedents pointed. There had been no meeting of the States-General since 1614; and in 1614 the presence of deputies of the Third Estate had been little more than a farce. The Parliament of Paris, consisting of privileged persons, naturally wanted this farce to be repeated in 1789; but times had changed. Rousseau in the *Contrat Social* had preached the absolute sovereignty of the people, and though few were as yet prepared to go as far as Rousseau went, yet liberal ideas were too prevalent for it to be possible to exclude the Third Estate from a position of something like equality with the other two. Moreover, the Government was convoking the States-General, in the hope of getting money out of the privileged classes; and they would have small chance of doing this, if the latter dominated in the assembly. The real question was whether the commons should have something more than equality. The Abbé Siéyès and the Duke of Orleans were proclaiming Rousseau's view, that the Third Estate was essentially—the Nation! Liberals were demanding (1) that the commons should have twice as many members as either of the other two

orders, and (2) that the three estates should sit and vote in a single house.

These two demands obviously hung together. It was of no use to have double representation, if the estates sat and voted separately. In that case, the privileged houses would constitutionally be able to reject every reform, and retain every privilege. The decision rested with the King, who ought to have decided once for all whether he meant to secure the taxation of the privileged classes at the risk of giving predominance to the democratic estate, or whether he meant to uphold the privileged, and try to persuade them to tax themselves. There was no room for compromise. The King must either take the lead in a peaceful and constitutional resolution, or he must cling to the old ways, and try if some other expedients could succeed better than those of Calonne, Brienne, and the rest. But Necker, who had been recalled to office, shrank from taking either course. By his advice the commons were allowed the double representation; but the question of one house or three was left open. In other words, a concession was made on the first question which would be either valueless or of great importance, according to how the second question was settled. A collision between the estates followed as a matter of course. The commons refused to constitute themselves into a separate house. They adopted the "passive attitude," declining to take any steps whatever till the other orders chose to join them. Everything was at a standstill except the deficit, which steadily grew! This was a sufficiently embarrassing state of things to the Government, which had run the risk of convoking the States-General, in the hope of getting some fresh taxes voted. But things looked still more alarming when at length the commons announced

that they were the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY—they, and as many members of the other estates as chose to sit and vote with them.

The Government had to take a side at last. They determined to throw in their lot with the privileged. One wet day the commons found the doors of the Assembly closed in their faces. The room was being prepared for a Royal Sessions. The excited deputies adjourned to a neighbouring tennis court, and there bound themselves by a solemn oath not to separate till they had given France a new Constitution.

The news of these proceedings spread rapidly through France, which during the past two years had grown electric. To the old miseries and grievances had now been added "the habit of thinking," or at least of talking, "about public affairs." The convocation of the Notables, and the return of the said Notables to their several homes, carrying with them irritation and anger, and the latest information about the short-comings of the Government, had begun this habit, if we may believe Lafayette. The long-maintained duel between de Brienne and the Paris Parliament had stimulated the excitement. The elections to the States-General would have added sufficient fuel to the fire, even if they had not been preceded by fierce discussions as to the form which the assembly should take, and accompanied by a direct invitation to draw up *cahiers* of grievances.

General elections are exciting things, even among sober Britons, who might well have discovered by now that their results seldom equal high expectations, or justify the pains spent on them. But to fervid Frenchmen, these elections of 1789 had all the attraction of complete novelty. "Five millions of men, of whom the greater part could not write,"

were called upon to vote, if not for deputies, at any rate for electors, who should in their turn choose the deputies ; and these elections were expected to put an end to the grievances of old France ! But when the deputies reached the capital, instead of rapid reforms, an expectant France got news only of a passive attitude ; and, last of all, the King, who had been fondly expected to become the chief reformer, as befitted the father of his people, was throwing in his lot with the tyrants, the bloodsuckers, the privileged ; and the commons, instead of submitting, were binding themselves together by tennis court oaths to give France a new constitution. We cannot wonder that the country had become electric !

CHAPTER III.

MIRABEAU TO THE FRONT.

THE Prelude to the Revolution was now over. The States-General had met. The country had sent in its grievances in a formal legal fashion, and was now proclaiming them informally and even riotously in many places. The commons had insisted on a fusion of orders; the King had thrown in his lot with the privileged, and had shut the doors in the face of the Third Estate. But the latter had not shrunk from the challenge. In the tennis court the members had sworn their oath to make a new constitution for France.

Accordingly the real conflict is about to begin. The question at issue is no less than this: *Shall the commons be everything or nothing?* But neither party yet recognizes this. Both think that they are ready to be conciliatory, to compromise. The King still talks of reforms. The Third Estate, even when declaring itself the National Assembly, proclaims its loyalty to the King with the same breath—and even its readiness to welcome nobles and clergy whenever it pleases them to take their places in the Assembly.

The first stage of the contest is in the Royal Sessions of June 23, 1789; and the chief glory in it falls to Honoré

Gabriel de Mirabeau. We will therefore now trace the early history of this man, the greatest of all the actors in the early stages of the French Revolution. He was the son of a very clever, obstinate and despotic marquis, who called himself the friend of man, but who proved himself the worst of enemies to the members of his own household. His hatred seems to have been specially directed against his wife, and against his eldest son, that particular son who was destined to be the glory of the family. The boy met hatred with rebellion. The father, having failed to break his spirit, sent him to the severest schoolmaster he could hear of, and compelled him to drop the name of Mirabeau. But the lad proved so brilliant a scholar that the stern pedagogue could find little fault, so the father re-called his son from school, and sent him into the army. Here the youth did some good fighting, and won the hearts of officers and men, but also of women, and got into various scrapes. For one of these he was flung into prison by means of one of those convenient *lettres de cachet*, by means of which influential people could get those obnoxious to them shut up without trial. Presently some sort of reconciliation took place. Honoré was liberated, and allowed to take back his own name; but apparently out of mere perverseness, the marquis insisted on his son leaving the military profession, to which he was attached. Soon afterwards he was again imprisoned by means of another *lettre de cachet*. Honoré next tried his hand at literature, and it was at this time that he wrote his *Essay on Despotism*. His personal experiences no doubt gave point to his rhetoric, and as usual, he won the hearts of his gaolers. So the marquis had him transferred to another prison, from whence he escaped, and fled to Holland, accompanied by Sophie de Mounier, a young

woman who was married to an elderly husband, and who now lost her heart to the ugly and impetuous prisoner. They were soon captured, and sent to different dungeons. During the three and a half years' imprisonment that followed, young Mirabeau had plenty of opportunity for solitary meditation, and study, and literary work. Then he was once more liberated. He visited England and Germany, got into fresh scrapes, and, above all, wrote pamphlet after pamphlet which attracted considerable notice, even in days when a perfect torrent of pamphlets was addressed to the reading public of France. When the States-General were convoked, his brother nobles excluded Mirabeau from their order. He turned to the commons, and was elected deputy by two different constituencies. So Honoré took his seat, heedless of the hisses with which his name was greeted at the opening meeting.

The six hundred commons deputies had come together an utterly unorganized collection of individuals. They were pretty unanimous in desiring sweeping reforms. At the great tennis court meeting there was only one dissentient. But they had no leaders, no pre-arranged programme or policy. Everything was new to them and to France. Each day brought its exigencies and its multitude of counsellors. About a dozen of the members seem to have taken some sort of lead in the proceedings. They were men whose previous career had been honourable, and who were at least unstained by the sort of scandals with which Mirabeau's name was associated. Yet his promptness and energy secured him from the first some sort of prominence. If he was not the inventor of the "passive attitude," he realized more clearly than most men the advantages of this masterly inaction; and by his eloquence

and sensible remarks, he helped to get it maintained in spite of all temptations to do something. And again when action became inevitable, Mirabeau took a prominent part in urging that the commons should proclaim themselves the National Assembly; though he wished them to assume only the humbler title of "Representatives of the French people." As yet however he was certainly not the foremost deputy. Bailly, Mounier, Malouet, Siéyès and others were as yet more prominent. But the crisis was now at hand, and Mirabeau at once sprang into his natural place as the true leader of the Revolution.

It was the 23rd of June, the day appointed for the Royal Sessions, when the King's ultimatum was declared, and the refractory deputies were informed that if they would not do as they were told, Louis would by himself provide for the good of his people. Would the deputies submit? Would they dare openly to disobey the King with an army at his back and the nobles on his side? It was all very well to talk about being the representatives of twenty-five millions. But what support could these millions give? The French army numbered 200,000 men; and a few regiments would suffice to turn out 600 deputies, or to fling them into prison, or to shoot them like dogs, if the order was given. And then the King had promised all sorts of reforms, and there was still much loyalty in France, much of the old readiness to receive royal assurances with enthusiasm. Who could say if the country would realize the paramount importance of insisting on the collective voting of the three estates? What would hungry men and women care about such a question? And even if they cared, what could the scattered unorganized masses do, but submit, as of yore, to king, nobles, prelates and army? In earlier times the

people had at times gained something from the divisions among their "betters." But their betters were now united; and surely irresistible.

These considerations were weighty; but Mirabeau no doubt saw that the danger was not really so great as it seemed. It is one of the notes of statesmanship to estimate correctly the forces that have to be dealt with. When the King retired, after commanding an adjournment, the nobles and clergy mostly obeyed. The commons remained, anxious and hesitating. Mirabeau bade them stand firm, and when the King's usher entered to remind the deputies of the King's wish, the great tribune boldly challenged the Government to use force :—

"If you have orders," he said, *"to remove us from this hall, you must also get authority to use force, for we shall yield to nothing but bayonets."* Such is Mirabeau's own account of his words; others give them a more rhetorical form. But the exact words matter little; the essential fact is that the challenge was given, and was not taken up. Instead of bayonets the Government sent carpenters, hoping apparently that the noise and dust raised in removing hoardings would interrupt the speeches. It proved however that it was the speeches that interrupted the carpenters. They paused in their work to listen to the burning words in which Mirabeau proceeded to move the inviolability of all deputies. Any one who should lay hands on any members of the National Assembly shall incur capital punishment.

That Mirabeau had correctly estimated the situation was still more clearly seen on the following day (June 24), when 149 of the clergy joined the Third Estate.¹ On the 25th

¹ There had from the first been a liberal minority among nobles and clergy, favourable to the fusion of orders. In the earliest divisions 114

came 45 of the nobles and nine more clergy. On the 26th there were fresh deserters, including the Archbishop of Paris. On the 27th the King wrote to the privileged orders, urging them to join the commons. The royal orders were obeyed ; and so the first great battle of the Revolution was won. There was a National Assembly, consisting of a single house, with a clear half of its members representing the Third Estate, and over one-fourth of the others sympathizing with the democracy.

Mirabeau himself was perhaps the least democratic of those whom he led to victory on this memorable occasion. He realized more vividly perhaps than any of them the danger of mob rule. Disorderly as his private life had been, he had that abhorrence of disorder which characterizes a born ruler. But he saw that the privileges of the privileged were themselves sources of disorder. He was convinced that at whatever risk these must be swept away. He had no wish to weaken the King's authority. Nay, he would gladly have strengthened it, if the King had not been so blind to his own interests as to make himself the tool of the privileged classes. At a later time, Mirabeau was resolute in maintaining the King's right of veto, and in the earlier discussions he had more than once exercised a moderating influence. But on June 23rd, it was a choice of evils ; and to Mirabeau the retention of the old iniquitous system of privilege was worse than the alternative. So he sprang at once into the post of danger, at the head of the opposition. But having won his victory he again became a moderator, who sought to conserve order and authority while fiercely attacking abuses. Characteristically he was the first to suggest the

clerics voted for union against 133 ; and 47 nobles against 188. But to vote for union was a very different matter from the June secession.

formation of a Citizen Guard, who might at once protect the Assembly and restrain the mob. But he was outvoted. The court party naturally objected to the plan ; and the radicals did not desire the mob to be restrained ; they looked to it for support.

Mirabeau was at this time a man of forty, with a huge head, a face disfigured by small-pox and by quack remedies applied to it in his childhood, and by carbuncles and marks of a dissipated life. Yet his ugliness was of the winning sort. He won the hearts of men and of women, of individuals and of masses. There is an evident genuineness and tenderness about him ; and as his queer father says, he "has swallowed all formulas." In an age of perpetual theorizing, he has pre-eminently a practical intellect. In a destructive age, his instincts are constructive. But he must first sweep away the rubbish of the old order. Then he will try to build up the new.

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER PROMINENT PERSONS.

HAVING introduced Mirabeau, the foremost figure in the early stages of the French Revolution, we will give a few words to some of the other chief actors.

Louis XVI. was peculiarly unfit for the position of king at so critical a period. To call his abilities moderate would be gross flattery. The work of governing was distasteful to him. In a fashion, he desired the happiness of his people; but his interest in them was far less than his interest in his own hunting. In his diary he wrote "Nothing" on the days when he had had no sport. A prime minister might have died, or a controller-general have been dismissed; but the fact that there has been no hunting must first be jotted down.

"Nothing; death of M. de Maurepas."

"Nothing; retirement of M. Necker."

So the entries run. Louis, like the rest of us, meant well; but he was as destitute of royal virtues as of royal vices. As a shopkeeper or a gamekeeper he might have done fairly well; his dull stupidity and awkward shyness would have mattered little in such a position; they might even have conduced to his character for respectability.

If Louis was unfit to be king, he was equally unfit to be

the husband of Marie Antoinette—an ambitious, accomplished, beautiful, pleasure-loving woman, who at the age of fifteen was married, for reasons of state, to the unattractive prince who four years later ascended the throne of France. The girl had been fairly well educated in useless accomplishments, and even in some not useless attainments. She could talk French and Italian fluently; but of the kind of knowledge most needful for one destined to be a queen, no smallest particle seems to have been imparted to her. Care was taken that on her journey to France no cripples or other repulsive persons should be seen; and this typifies the way in which the ugly facts of life were kept out of sight in the education of the princess. In the early years of her queenship she seems to have regarded existence as a holiday, into which as much enjoyment as possible was to be squeezed; and when we remember the frivolity of the courtiers; the youth and beauty of the Queen; the flatteries and the temptations; above all, perhaps, the kind of husband she had married, we find it hard to blame her very severely. Her fêtes, and dancings, and flirtations, her craving for excitement and novelty were natural enough, and not more culpable than the addiction of Louis to hunting, and the absurd self-conceit which made him pride himself on his puritanical distaste for the amusements which attract most young people, and in which the King was so ludicrously incompetent to shine.

The young Queen's position was one needing considerable tact. As an Austrian, she belonged to the nation which France was traditionally most hostile to. This alone would have made her an object of suspicion. She had fallen too on very critical days. In a court where scandal flourished even to rankness; in a society where the Voltaire spirit had

undermined loyalty ; in a country well advanced on the path to the Revolution, the Queen could scarcely have escaped criticism and calumny, however wisely she had ordered her life. As it was, her indiscretions half-justified scandal. Once, when she was ill, she insisted on being waited upon in bed by four gentlemen, all of whom were suspected of being her favoured lovers, and known to be profligates. This took place in her own peculiar residence, the Trianon, her husband meanwhile living at Versailles. She had already made the Trianon a bye-word by the extravagances and dissipations which she perpetrated. All sorts of abominable things were supposed to take place there, and were related in scurrilous verses, and sung of in scurrilous songs. But there is no real evidence that she did anything worse than encourage and enjoy herself with dissolute nobles, some of whom had certainly declared themselves to be her admirers.

For years Marie Antoinette seemed to live only for pleasure. She quarrelled with reforming ministers ; she aggravated the financial difficulties by her reckless extravagance. She secured the promotion of worthless favourites. But when troubles and humiliations began to press on the royal family, she met them with a spirit that has won the unwilling admiration of fair-minded opponents. "The Queen," said Mirabeau, "is the only *man* that the King has about him." She was the centre of the reactionary party : the inspirer of whatever courage the Royalists showed. We cannot wonder that this only added to her unpopularity among a people who had been taught to regard her as a monster of impurity, and who found her now the most strenuous of the opponents to the reforms on which their hearts were set.

The other members of the Royal Family were most of them naturally on the same side. It was their business to be Royalists, when the monarchy was in danger, though they had little love for either King or Queen. There was, however, one notable exception—a Royal Duke who made it his trade to be a democrat. This was Philip, Duke of Orleans, cousin to the King, father of that Louis Philippe who afterwards became King. The Orleans family had been notorious for profligacy in the most profligate days; and our Philip was about the most abominable of them all. His excesses were the talk of the town in the latter years of Louis XV.'s reign; and the young man is said to have taken pleasure in spreading exaggerated reports of them. He served for a time in the French navy, but his cowardice, or sheer stupidity, led to the loss of his one battle. Yet he thought himself entitled to the Grand Admiralty of France when the post fell vacant. Louis XVI. was now on the throne. He was generally ready enough to promote his kinsmen. But this one had not only disgraced himself by cowardice—he had also incurred the bitter hatred of the Queen. His cool application was therefore refused, and though a special post was created for him to soften the blow, his hatred for the King is said to date from then. The Revolution gave him opportunities enough for revenge. He was possessed of enormous wealth, and animated by a strong passion for notoriety. As he had formerly aimed at a glorious pre-eminence in vice, so he now sought to be the leader of the Revolution. He spent money with a free hand; employed spies and journalists, and all sorts of people to push his schemes and sing his praises; gave splendid entertainments to radicals, and liberal alms to the poor, when this could be done in such a fashion

as to advertize him. As early as in de Brienne's quarrel with the Parliament, Orleans had resisted the King. When the States-General met he openly associated himself with the commons; and by the time we have now reached, he was regarded as the leader of the Radicals in the Assembly—the *Left*, as they were soon to be called.

But as yet perhaps the most prominent of the Revolutionists was the Marquis of Lafayette, who at the age of twenty had crossed the Atlantic to fight for the American rebels. Washington eagerly welcomed the young Frenchman, whom he regarded as a sort of first-fruits of a coming French alliance. This alliance followed in due course, but what concerns us here is, that Lafayette showed some military ability; and that when he returned to France, his countrymen received him with enthusiasm, as a vanquisher of Englishmen, and a representative of democratic opinions. He came back imbued with the doctrines of the American Declaration of Rights; and soon made himself prominent among the opponents of the King's Government. Thus, in the Assembly of Notables (1787) he attacked Calonne with so much boldness that people daily expected that he would be sent to the Bastille by a *lettre de cachet*. He was also the first formally to demand a convocation of the States-General; even as at a later time he was the man chiefly responsible for the drawing up of the Rights of Man by the National Assembly. For the present we will only add that he was rich, handsome and enthusiastic, with a high character and fair abilities; but somewhat too fastidious to play the part of a leader in such a revolution as that which was about to open.

Of other prominent actors in the early stages of the French Revolution we can only mention a few. There

was the Abbé Siéyès, a clergyman who sprang to fame by a timely pamphlet, written just before the States-General elections, which aptly expressed the feeling struggling for utterance in many hearts—the feeling that the Third Estate was properly France; that it had been nothing, but should now be everything. He had read much and thought deeply on political questions; and at a later time he was very prominent among the Constitution makers. But, like most of his contemporaries, he was too theoretic, too fond of abstract principles and symmetries, too little appreciative of the actual needs of actual men and women, or of the necessity of adapting institutions to those particular kind of beings who are to live under them. At the beginning of 1789 Siéyès had completed his fortieth year. He was elected to the States-General, not by his own estate (the clergy), but by the commons of Paris. A still more radical parson was Grégoire, who took a prominent part among those of the clergy who sympathized with the Third Estate. We shall see him again, an ardent Revolutionist, but yet faithful to Christianity at a time when it was hard and dangerous enough to combine the two fidelities. He was three years younger than Siéyès.

Still younger were Barnave and Mounier. The former was but twenty-eight when the States-General met; and scarcely turned thirty when he retired from active political life. But in the brief interval no politician except Mirabeau held a more prominent place among the orators of the Assembly. His high character, his radical opinions, his ambition, courage and patriotism combined with his eloquence to win him the position. His father was a Protestant lawyer of Grenoble. Barnave himself, like most of the other leading men of his time, seems to have been more

Pagan than Christian, a curious medley of antique stoicism and contemporary sentimentalism. Mounier was of a somewhat similar type. Born in the same town, but of even humbler parentage, he co-operated warmly with his younger colleague in the first stages of the Revolution, and was elected President of the National Assembly. His revolutionary fervour had however been somewhat modified by a very careful study of English politics, and events moved so fast that the Radical of 1789 found himself something of a Conservative in 1790.

The really Radical revolutionists—Robespierre, Danton, Marat, St. Just, Camille Desmoulins—seemed as yet insignificant persons. Some of them were already known and eagerly listened to by Paris mobs. Robespierre alone of them sat in the Assembly, and he, as yet, generally sat there in silence. We may therefore postpone the introduction of these men.

CHAPTER V.

JUNE 23 TO OCTOBER 6, 1789.

THE first act of the Revolution occupied less than four months, and included four specially dramatic incidents. On June 23, Mirabeau defied the Government to use force. On July 14, the Paris mob took the Bastille. On Aug. 4, the old Constitution of France was abolished. On Oct. 6, the King and the Assembly were brought to Paris.

Of Mirabeau's defiance we have already spoken. Its immediate result was a complete victory. The privileged orders joined the commons, and there was at length that single house, so much longed for by reformers, so much feared by Conservatives. But this concession was only intended to be temporary. Bayonets were to be used; but not till military preparations were so far formed that resistance might seem impossible. Within three weeks of the Royal Sessions everything was ready. On July 11, Necker and three others of the more moderate ministers were dismissed. Their portfolios were transferred to men not likely to shrink from violence.

But the news of Necker's dismissal led at once to a rising in the capital, and when the troops were brought up to quell it, they proved to be utterly 'demoralized.' They

refused to obey orders to fire on their fellow-countrymen. They had to be withdrawn from the capital, while the mob were arming themselves and carrying busts of Necker and Orleans triumphantly through the streets. There was far less of plunder and outrage than might have been expected. The electors of Paris exerted themselves energetically to protect property. They organized a citizen army (such as Mirabeau had suggested in the Assembly), and this National Guard saved the city from pillage, but did not interfere with the political demonstrations of the rioters.

On the third day of the riots (July 14) the mob directed itself against the Bastille. For five hours an excited crowd raged round its walls. The fortress was far too strong to be taken by such assailants; but there was little food stored within it: so the governor surrendered. The wretched Bastille prisoners (there were but seven of them) were liberated; and the hated building was soon afterwards destroyed.

This victory of the mob was an event calculated to impress the most sluggish imagination. In the provinces it acted as a fresh stimulus to disorder. It was an example to be followed on the provincial Bastilles: the castles of the nobility. The King himself was deeply moved. He saw, for the moment, the necessity of coming to terms with the Assembly; so he recalled Necker, promised to remove all troops from Versailles, and assured the deputies that he had never intended to use force against them. This was certainly false. But the Assembly was satisfied with the King's surrender. They acted as mediators between him and the mob. The latter, as yet easily pacified, gave Louis a hearty reception, and proclaimed him "Restorer of French Liberty." The victory seemed won. The more extreme

aristocrats retired from France. The more moderate ones voluntarily renounced whatever remained of their old privileges. On August 4 took place what a Royalist called "the St. Bartholomew of property." Serfdom was abolished, with all feudal rights and dues, and ecclesiastical tithes, and all the privileges and monopolies of guilds, provinces, nobility and clergy. In that one sitting the whole mediæval constitution of France was condemned. Monarchy, aristocracy and church were indeed to survive for a time; but they were stripped of their ancient rights. Thus when Louis declined to sanction the decrees of August 4, the Assembly decided that his sanction was not needed.

It is easy to decree the abolition of a Constitution, but not so easy to build up a new one; and it is hardest of all to get your new one to work. It took the Assembly twenty-three months to draw up a Constitution (August 1789 to September 1791), and during the interval there was a sort of makeshift government, chaotic, inefficient, a mixture of old institutions nominally abolished, and new ones not yet legalized. The Assembly had grasped the supreme power, but had little means of wielding it. Such order as was maintained was chiefly maintained by National Guards; for most parts of France had imitated the capital in forming citizen armies. The Paris National Guard was put under the command of Lafayette, who seemed for the moment the most prominent man in France, and aspired to be the Washington of the French Revolution. But his present task was full of difficulty. Paris was suffering from excess of talk and insufficiency of food. Though patriots remark with satisfaction that emigrants cannot take their lands with them, it is found that, in spite of all efforts to prevent it, they can export their gold, carrying it off, if need be, in hollow walking-

sticks. The flight of the rich throws many out of employment. All those whose work it has been to minister to the luxuries of the wealthy—artists, actors, shopkeepers, and many sorts of artizans and domestic servants—are thrown out of work. Those who can afford to do so emigrate in their turn. The others swell the ranks of the unemployed. The fall of the Bastille does not lower the price of bread ; nor does it seem possible to check the emigration of the well-to-do. Six thousand passports are issued within two months. Then no more are to be granted, except on a medical certificate. But doctors are obliging, and medical certificates flow in. Meanwhile the sufferings and suspicions and wrath of the poor keep growing. Often the National Guard have to use force. The municipality buys up corn in the provinces, and sells it a little below cost price ; but to the thousands of unemployed the price is still almost prohibitive.

And now comes the news of splendid banquets at Versailles, while the people are starving. And it is said that at one banquet (Oct. 3rd) the national colours have been trampled upon, and replaced by Bourbon white, the symbol of the old tyranny. The women of Paris now try their hand at improving the situation. Six thousand of them set off for Versailles, in some sort of military order—to visit the King and the Assembly. A deputation gets admitted to the King ; and the main body bursts in on the Assembly. The proceedings become disorderly. Members slink away. The women put one of themselves into the chair, and proceed to make speeches and to move resolutions, till the welcome arrival of provisions, which the President of the Assembly has sent for, creates a diversion. Satisfied for once with food, the women seek shelter where they can, and the day closes in peace. But the crisis was

still to come. The women had been followed by many males, and these again by Lafayette, with a strong body of National Guards. At six the next morning the palace is attacked. The Queen has to fly half-dressed from her bedroom to the King's apartments. The assailants are with difficulty repulsed; but round the palace the whole mob collects, angry and excited. Louis and Marie Antoinette show themselves from a balcony, and the people receive them with hearty cheers. But mixed up with these are cries of "The King to Paris!" and Lafayette advises Louis to yield. He probably sympathized in some measure with the cry. As commander of the National Guard, he was now the most powerful man in Paris. He believed that with his citizen troops he could answer for order and protect the King. So he was not sorry to see the triumph of the mob demands. The Assembly decided to follow the King. So the Central Government moved into Paris, with serious results, as we shall hereafter see.

For the present, however, hope was once more the prevalent feeling. There was much singing and dancing, many processions and illuminations. The friends of freedom in all lands rejoiced. Even moderate and responsible statesmen, like Pitt and Fox, considered that the progress of affairs was a matter for congratulation; while the young poets, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, were filled with enthusiasm. Burke, almost alone among eminent Englishmen, raised a warning voice. He had studied history too closely not to see what dangers were involved in such sudden and rapid changes as France had been going through. Fine phrases and abstract theories about the rights of men were likely to be poor substitutes for the binding forces and restraints of custom and of old-established institutions.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSTITUTION MAKING.

THE task now laid on the Assembly was to draw up a new Constitution for France—a task of tremendous difficulty. It was not merely a question of defining the rights and powers of the King and the legislation. The whole administrative and judicial machinery had to be created. The old Constitution had rested completely on privileges which had now been condemned. Offices had passed from father to son, or had been filled by purchase, or by the arbitrary nomination of the sovereign. All these systems were now to be swept away, and indeed they were theoretically indefensible. Yet they had worked in a fashion, with more or less inefficiency—generally more.

Some sort of order had been maintained ; some sort of national development had taken place. The abuses had indeed come to be so intolerable that the whole edifice had to be destroyed. But it was by no means certain that a new system, even if theoretically far better, would for many years secure even the moderate degree of order that had existed under the old régime. When a Constitution has gradually grown, men adapt themselves to it, and the institutions in some degree adapt themselves to the needs of

the society in which they develop. But "paper constitutions" imposed on a nation by an Assembly, however national, are apt to prove unworkable.

The difficulties of the Assembly were much aggravated by pressure from above and from below. From the King indeed there was not likely to be much persistent opposition. He was at once too good-natured and too indolent. But the Queen, the courtiers, and the majority of the old nobility, and of the Church dignitaries, were certain to do their best to hamper the revolutionary work; and these reactionaries formed about a third of the whole Assembly. They interrupted the proceedings, resorted to obstructive tactics, and seemed deliberately to aim at weakening the authority and dignity of the Assembly to which they belonged.

But the pressure from below was a more serious difficulty. The misery of the poor, especially in Paris, had been aggravated by disorder and emigration. Hope had for a time helped men to endure, but hope deferred was beginning to bear its fruits; and the triumph of the mob in the capture of the Bastille, and in the bringing of the King to Paris, had encouraged them to believe in disorder and riot as means for securing whatever objects they desired. The Assembly was constantly being diverted from its task of constitution-making by the necessity of issuing pacificatory proclamations, and taking more practical measures for the maintenance of order or the relief of distress. Its proceedings were often interrupted by deputations from the miserable, and by disorder in the galleries. The National Guards were still strong enough and loyal enough to protect the legislators from being at the mercy of the Paris mob. But its pressure exercised a distinct influence on the proceedings, and

especially it sufficed to extort some socialistic measures, of which we shall speak further on.

Within the Assembly parties were gradually formed, and took their names from the positions they occupied relatively to the president. The Reactionists and Conservatives were called the *Right*; the Moderates, and especially those who wished to model the new Constitution according to English precedents, were known as the *Centre*; while the Radicals were spoken of as the *Left*.

More than half the whole Assembly belonged to the 'Left'; but they could scarcely be said to form a party. The friends and dependants of the Duke of Orleans tried to represent the Left as an Orleans party; but many of these Radicals hated and despised their would-be leader. Some of them, like Mirabeau, were profoundly convinced of the paramount importance of order, and sincerely anxious to strengthen the King's authority. Others, like Robespierre, were disciples of Rousseau—Socialists and Republicans at heart; though, as yet, they did not openly attack the monarchy. Others again were Economists and Voltaireans. Scarcely any of them had had any practical experience of the work of government; but many of them had been zealous students of political science, and were now eager to give their theories a trial. And unfortunately the political science of the eighteenth century was utterly unpractical and unhistorical. It paid little attention to the variations of human nature and human needs in different countries and ages; but proceeded in a *a priori* fashion to lay down abstract principles and deduce logical conclusions, with little appeal to actual experience and fact, save for the purpose of illustrating foregone conclusions. Men like Siéyès and Barnave were fond enough, perhaps too fond, of appealing to classical and other

precedents ; but their arguments were none the less utterly unhistorical.

Under the influence of such mistaken methods, the Assembly spent much valuable time in defining "the Rights of Man." Lafayette introduced the subject. Fifty-four orators speedily put down their names to speak upon it. After weeks of discussion the great document was drawn up, in a form that differed in almost every clause from what Lafayette had proposed. But it exercised so little influence on subsequent events that it is not necessary to give any account of it. Then Grégoire wanted the Assembly to begin discussing the "Duties of Man." The proposal has some significance as reminding us of the existence of a few among the clergy and pious laity who regarded the Revolution as the natural outcome of Catholicism, and were eager to stamp it with a moral and religious character. But the Assembly was either weary of abstract discussions, or less eager to define human duties than human rights. So it refused to follow Grégoire in this new digression. Carlyle grimly says that they should have concerned themselves more with the *Mights* than with the *Rights of Man*. And indeed the really burning question was how to control and harmonize the existing forces of royalism, clericalism, hungry men and women, army falling to pieces from lack of discipline, and so on. The supreme merit of Mirabeau was that he discerned this. He perceived that the one hope of escaping chaos lay in the possibility of getting the King and the Assembly to work together. The executive and the legislative powers must both be strong, and must be got to co-operate. In England there was such co-operation. But the condition of France was very different from that of England ; and the desired

result could not be obtained by slavishly copying the English constitution. Only let them keep this object in view.

For instance, the Radicals wanted to exclude the King's ministers from the future legislative assemblies. They were so jealous of the royal power that they feared to allow the King's ministers to gain what extra influence a seat in the legislature would give them. But Mirabeau saw that to exclude the ministers would tend to prevent mutual understandings and co-operations. So in spite of charges of treachery and of personal ambition to become himself at once minister and deputy, he fiercely opposed the party with whom he ordinarily acted. On the other hand, he warmly maintained that the Assembly should have the right of impeaching the King's ministers, so that the King might be compelled to employ men not altogether distasteful to the representatives of the people.

Again, as to the right of declaring war : Barnave and the Radicals wanted to entrust this power to the Assembly. The reactionaries naturally wanted to keep it in the King's hands. Mirabeau advocated an arrangement under which the King and Assembly must co-operate in any declaration of war. He evidently desired that every act of the Government should come, so far as possible, with a double authority—with the authority that loyalists would recognize as the highest, as well as with that of the national representatives.

Sometimes he was successful, and sometimes outvoted. He had entered into secret negotiations with the Court. They paid him a pension, but viewed him with suspicion. He took their money, but retained his independence, sometimes speaking and voting against their desires. But

the need of his assistance became more and more felt. At length the Queen vouchsafed him a private interview, and professed herself charmed with him. Mirabeau was equally pleased; said she was the "only man the King had about him," and declared that the monarchy should be saved.

It was a bold promise, and yet if the Queen and the Royalists were really ready to be guided henceforth by Mirabeau's advice, it is not impossible that it might have been fulfilled—if only Mirabeau had lived for a few more years!

But this was not to be. He had been wearing himself out with labour and debauchery; and he was suddenly struck down when his brain seemed most active and his hopes were most high. On the 28th of March he spoke five times in the Assembly, though the doctor had ordered him to rest. Then he dragged himself home to die.

When it was known that he was dangerously ill the excitement and anxiety was great. Royalists and democrats alike seemed to feel that they could not get on without this man, whom all parties had in turns reviled. The King kept sending to inquire about his condition. The mob thronged the street, waiting for the physician's report; and when the end had come, the theatres had to close, private parties had to be postponed, horses were only allowed to proceed at walking pace in the streets of Paris. They buried him in the Pantheon, which had been newly opened for the bodies of those to whom France was grateful; and we read that long afterwards, when difficult questions were agitating the Assembly, men's eyes would turn instinctively to the place where Mirabeau had been wont to sit.

And indeed his counsel had never been more needed than in the months that followed his death. For the

confusions and the difficulties of the situation were being constantly aggravated by the ecclesiastical, the financial, and the socialistic legislation of the National (or as it was now generally called, the Constituent) Assembly. Of these we must now speak.

What to do about the Church was in some respects the most difficult problem that the Assembly had to deal with. The privileges and abuses of the old Church system were among the greatest scandals of the *ancien régime*. To leave these alone would have been impossible; and yet some of them were intertwined with the religious convictions of a considerable portion of the French people. To shock these convictions was undesirable and dangerous, and calculated to raise up enemies to the new constitution. If great changes were to be made, there was need of much tact and tenderness in making them. And unfortunately there was so much hostility to religion, in many of the reformers, that unnecessary harshness and insults were likely to be used.

The chief changes made mostly fall under two heads: (1) the property of the Church was confiscated, but the Assembly undertook to pay salaries to the bishops and clergy; (2) an elective system was introduced, under which both bishops and parish priests were to be elected by the laity amongst whom they were to minister. In the former of these, the Assembly was partly actuated by a desire to diminish the deficit, which still disfigured the French budget; but partly also by a wish to redistribute clerical incomes. An ordinary parish priest would be somewhat better off under the new system than under the old, provided that his salary was duly paid. But the incomes of the ecclesiastical dignitaries would be considerably diminished. Moreover, the clerical

estate would lose not a little of its independence. In place of property, it would have salaries, which some future Assembly might diminish or abolish if the clergy offended it, or if the national finances became still more disorganized. The introduction of the elective system would emphasize the dependence of the clergy on the laity. Like all other systems of appointment it had obvious defects. Its adoption was no doubt part of the prevailing passion for applying abstract principles of eighteenth century political science, with too little regard for traditions, customs, habits of thought, and practical inconveniences. The representative system is plainly one of the greatest value. But it does not follow that every post should be filled by a direct election. In England, for instance, the Prime Minister may be said to be chosen by a sort of indirect election, while most offices are filled, not by election from below, but by nomination from above. Our bishops, judges, and other important officials are in this position. But in France, under the Constitution of 1791, little use was made of this sort of system. Election pure and simple, though often a complicated sort of election, became the rule; and this principle was now applied to ecclesiastical offices.

Besides these fundamental changes the Assembly ordered an inspection of all monasteries and nunneries—an inspection that was in many cases carried out with little regard to the feelings of the pious. They proclaimed the right of monks and nuns to renounce their vows; and in some cases suppressed religious houses altogether. In this respect, and in most others, the changes were not so great as those which Henry VIII. and his Seven Years' Parliament carried through in England. It is difficult on any ground, except that of expediency, to defend the earlier Reformation

movements in England, and yet to condemn the ecclesiastical legislation of the Assembly. But the event proved that in the former case the Government was strong enough to introduce the new system, in spite of some formidable riots; while in the latter the changes led ultimately to civil war, and divided French society into two hostile camps, with a division that was to last for a hundred years, between the Church and the Revolution.

This deplorable result was partly due to a resolution of the Assembly requiring all the clergy to take an oath of loyalty to the new Constitution. In England, the Tudor rulers were wise enough not to hurry matters in this way. They tendered a similar oath to the chief officers of the Church; but they left ordinary parsons time to adapt themselves to the new system, so long as they did not openly attack it. If the French Assembly had shown equal prudence, it is possible that the storm would have blown over.

Many of the priests were peasants by birth, and sympathized at heart with most of the revolutionary changes that had taken place. They had shown their sympathies, in the early days of the States-General, in spite of pressure from their superiors. They would, many of them, gladly have remained neutral. But they were now called on, under pain of dismissal, publicly and formally to accept a system condemned by the Pope and the Church authorities. About one-third of them complied. Many hesitated; but in the end a large majority refused. They were expelled from their cures, and naturally became centres of reactionary agitation. Their places were only filled with difficulty, and largely by men of bad character. Pious Catholics naturally resented the change, and would not accept the ministrations

of those whom they regarded as schismatics. There were rival services in places where parties were pretty equally divided. Elsewhere the majority generally suppressed the minority after more or less rioting and disorder. There was bloodshed in many parts of France; and even when some sort of order had been restored, the rival parties were ready to fly at one another's throats at the earliest opportunity. Thus the ecclesiastical legislation of the Assembly paved the way for the later civil war, and especially for the terrible rising in La Vendée.

The *financial* policy of the Assembly was similarly fraught with disastrous consequences; and yet in this case too, it is difficult to see what should have been done. The deficit had swollen to portentous dimensions. The confiscated Church lands could not be put into the market all at once without heavy loss; for in the impoverished condition of the country, the number of purchasers able and willing to give a fair price was comparatively small. The Assembly tried to tide over the difficulty by a large issue of inconvertible paper money. The paper was, however, to be convertible into land, that is to say, it was to be accepted at its full value in the purchase of confiscated lands. The notes were called *assignats*, because they were thus assigned to the definite purpose of land purchase, and were to be destroyed when that purpose was fulfilled. This plan was proposed by Mirabeau, and was well suited both to give an immediate relief to the treasury and to prevent a great depreciation in land values. Moreover it would facilitate the purchase of land by the more prosperous of the peasants, who would hoard the assignats till they had enough to enable them to become proprietors. Mirabeau saw that the multiplication of small proprietors would give great

stability to the Revolution; for every proprietor would fear that if the reaction triumphed, his land would be resumed: his interests accordingly were closely wound up with the Revolution. But while we admire the ingenuity of the whole scheme, and the success with which it was carried through, we must admit that it was open to the serious objection which besets all ingenious tamperings with the currency. Their success tempts men to fresh experiments. It is fatally easy to secure temporary relief by issuing bits of paper and requiring men to take them as equivalent to coin. But if such a policy is carried far enough, it disorders all industry, reduces commerce to a sort of gambling, and inflicts a greater burden on the community than any tax that any government has ever laid on its subjects. So it was in the case of France. If the Government had stopped short at Mirabeau's proposed issue the evils caused would have been slight, and far overbalanced by the advantages gained. But the success of the first issue tempted them to try a second, and then another, and yet another. It is not reasonable, however, to blame the Assembly for the financial follies of its successors.

Under the head of *socialistic* legislation, the Assembly instituted, or rather encouraged municipalities to institute, public workshops, in which all who were willing to work could obtain immediate employment; and they purchased immense quantities of grain, which they sold under cost price through the dealers, by a rather elaborate system which we need not pause to examine. The object of both these measures was of course to relieve the distress in Paris and the large towns at the expense of the tax-payers. The whole question of the justice of taxing the rich and the comfortable for the benefit of the poor is full of difficulty.

But we may notice that at this time there was an exceptional justification for such a policy, in the fact that the urban poor had borne so large a share in winning the revolutionary victories, and yet were the class who had gained least. It was the middle and lower middle classes and the peasants who had reaped the chief advantages of the abolition of feudalism and privileges, of the opening of offices to all, and of the more equitable distribution of taxation. The men and women who had attacked the Bastille and marched to Versailles, and supported the Third Estate against the others, were as badly off as ever; and it seemed reasonable that those who had profited so much should be taxed for the benefit of those who had borne the most and risked the most, and who were now starving and vainly seeking work. But the public workshops and cheap food aggravated the evils they were intended to remedy, by attracting swarms of vagrants to the already overcrowded towns. In Paris alone there were soon over 30,000 daily applicants for work at the municipal workshops. It was found impossible to secure good work; for every one who came had a claim to employment, whatever his capacities might be. More and more taxes had to be levied, more and more assignats had to be issued, in order to keep up the regular payments at the public works and the supply of cheap food, and yet the distress steadily grew.

It must, however, in fairness be remembered that the position of the Assembly was full of difficulties. They had to deal with evils that had accumulated during many generations. They found the nation in a most deplorable condition. Neither the distress of the poor nor the financial confusion was of their making. They had carried important reforms, which they could not carry without some

disorder and rioting. They had felt themselves bound to vote immense sums in compensation for vested interests which their reforms had disturbed.¹ They were harassed by the opposition of nobles, courtiers, dissident priests and others. They were responsible for order in a country where the old authorities had been swept away. We must not therefore necessarily blame them for adopting measures which in more ordinary circumstances would have been indefensible.

In the June of 1791 the situation was aggravated by an attempt of the Royal Family to escape from the power of Assembly and mob. The Marquis of Bouillé, who commanded the troops stationed near the Luxemburg frontier, was an ardent Royalist. Across the frontier there were many emigrants and an Austrian army, which the Emperor might be willing to use in aid of his sister Marie Antoinette. Louis was by no means anxious to put himself in the hands of Austrians and emigrants. He dreaded provoking civil and domestic war. But after the death of Mirabeau, his hopes of any settlement tolerable to his wife, or even to himself, became small; and at length he was persuaded to fly from Paris in disguise, towards Bouillé and the frontier. The expedition was badly managed. The royal coach was cumbrous and slow. Suspicions were unnecessarily aroused. Excited patriots started in pursuit; and when the coach reached the Varennes bridge, at the further end of which some of Bouillé's men were posted, the fugitives found that the bridge was barricaded; and that a band of citizens were blocking the way. It was past midnight, and the soldiers on the further side had gone to bed. By morning, Varennes

¹ The capitalized value of the sums voted in compensation amounted to 1,430,000,000 francs.

was swarming with National Guards. Louis would not sanction an attempt at a rescue, and so the royal couple were brought back to Paris, which had been in a state of considerable excitement. The possibility of the King's flight had long been contemplated. Royalists had hoped much from it. Patriots had feared much. And now the long and anxiously expected event had taken place. But Paris soon discovered that the royal flight made no great difference. Bread was neither cheaper nor dearer. Laws were as well, and as badly, administered as before. There was no increase of disorder, or of order. During those five days, when Louis was absent, many people realized that France could get on without a king. The word "Republic" began to be openly spoken; and although the capture and forced return of Louis saved Monarchy for a time, there seems no doubt but that the chief consequence of the attempted flight was to spread Republican ideas, and to discredit Royalism still further. It was now clear to the ordinary Frenchman that a king might be a traitor, that he might conspire with emigrants or foreigners, and that the retaining or rejecting of Monarchy might be a choice of evils. When the King returned to Paris, a placard on the city walls announced that "Whosoever insults Louis shall be caned, whosoever cheers him shall be hanged." This aptly described the situation. Louis was to be a king, but one calling forth no loyalty. Express articles were added to the Constitution, providing that if the King broke his oath, or sanctioned an armed attack on France, he should cease to reign. In other words he was only to be King so long as he behaved himself.

Soon after this incident, the Constituent Assembly completed its work. It had built its new Constitution, with a king (on good behaviour) nominally at its head; with a single

Legislative House, which was to be chosen by a double system of election *i. e.* by electors who were themselves elected by the votes of all active¹ citizens in the various constituencies ; with a Church turned into a department of the State ; with a reformed and more humane system of criminal law ; with Departments instead of Provinces ; and with 44,000 communes or municipalities, each of which enjoyed great rights and considerable independence of the Central Government.

In many respects the work of the Constituent Assembly had been well done. Trial by jury, religious toleration, the abolition of privileges, freedom of trade within the country, were given by it to France. But on the other hand, there were serious defects in the new Constitution. The exclusion of the Ministers from the Assembly aggravated the likelihood of a collision between the King and the Legislature. The system of *electing* judges was fraught with danger to judicial independence. There were indeed too many elections to be carried through. The active citizens were expected to display a quite abnormal amount of activity, with the natural consequence that most of them neglected their duties, and that political power fell into the hands of an active minority. It must further be admitted that the local authorities were left too free from control, though this was in some respects better than the excessive centralization of later French Constitutions. Finally, we may mention among the mistakes made by the Constituent Assembly, the irrational self-denying ordinance by which all its members

¹ An "active" citizen was one who had paid annually in direct taxes an amount about equivalent to a week's wages. The limitation of the suffrage to active citizens excluded more than a quarter of the adult males of France. The same limitation applied to municipal and local elections.

were forbidden to seek election in the new Legislature. This deprived the country of the services of men, who during the past two years had gained, partly through their own mistakes, valuable experience of legislative duties and of national needs.

Yet it ought in fairness to be remembered that the difficulties under which the Constitution of 1791 broke down, were mostly of such a character that they could not have been avoided by any skill in Constitution making. The bitterness of parties ; the attitude of the old nobility and the majority of the clergy ; the interference of foreign powers, who feared the spread of Revolutionary ideas into their own dominions ; the folly of the Court and the delusions of the mob, ruined all hope of a successful working of the new institutions.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY.

THE new Constitution lasted only one year. It was accepted by the King in September 1791; but in the following August he was hurled from the throne, and France entered that period of chaos which may be called a second Revolution, or series of Revolutions.

The elections to the only Legislative Assembly that met under the Constitution of 1791, revealed a widespread indifference to politics among the "active" citizens. Most of them abstained from voting altogether. The explanation of this seems to be that the middle and lower middle classes had now secured the things they chiefly wanted from Government. Feudalism and privileges had been swept away. Tolerable judicial and administrative systems had been established. The power of the Church was broken, and the Church lands had passed into the hands of active citizens. The small landed proprietors and the commercial classes alike, relieved from their old burdens, were now eagerly bent on availing themselves of the new conditions, and on making money as fast as possible. Most of them were too busy or too careless to exercise their political rights. Those who did vote, voted mostly for men as devoid of political principles as themselves, men whose political creed

might almost be summed up as a twofold dread of *Ancien Régime* and New Democracy. A triumph of the old nobility might mean a resumption of Church lands, or a restoration of privileges. A triumph of the mob leaders would endanger property and profits. Either would be unfavourable to middle class enrichment ; and so the middle classes returned a majority favourably disposed to the existing state of things, to the Revolution so far as it had gone ; so far, but no further.

In a sense then there was a Conservative majority. But the old Conservative party, which included perhaps a third of the old Constituent, was unrepresented in the new Legislative. Emigration and abstentions rather than numerical weakness prevented the aristocratic and ultra clerical party from securing any representatives in the Assembly. This might reasonably be regretted by a wise reformer. For the party was still strong in the country. It possessed much wealth and much influence ; and an Assembly in which it was not represented could not really represent France. The aristocrats and clericals stood outside the Legislative, forming plots, intriguing with foreign powers, and occupying the places in the King's Ministry. They were thus a source of national weakness and disunion, and far more harmful than they would have been if they had been fairly represented in the Legislature.

The most Conservative section of that Assembly consisted of men who had warmly sympathized with the earlier Revolutionary movements, but who considered the Constitution somewhat too democratic, and were determined to resist any increase of popular power. These men had belonged to the Jacobin Club, the chief Radical organization and meeting ground. But they had now seceded, and

formed a new club for themselves. It met in what had been a Feuillant monastery, and the party came to be known as the Feuillants. Lafayette and Barnave were its most distinguished members. Owing to the self-denying ordinance (see page 57) they were excluded from the Assembly. Thus the party which formed the *Right* of the new Legislature was led by outsiders.

Other parties were in a similar position. The leaders of the Radicals were men like Siéyès, Robespierre, and others who had no seats in the Legislature. The chief Radical group within the Assembly consisted of those known as Girondists, from the fact that several of them represented the Gironde department. These were enthusiastic, but somewhat visionary democrats. Already they would gladly have substituted a Republic for the Monarchy. They did not scruple to encourage mob demonstrations and even rioting, for the purpose of influencing and intimidating the Government; and they thus helped to raise a power which they could not control. They were mostly young and inexperienced men, eloquent, and to some extent the dupes of their own eloquence. Their fine phrases were largely borrowed from ancient writers, who ranted about liberty in the days of the Roman despotism. They recognized the need of raising the national character in order to fit France for democratic institutions; and they came to think that they could best do this by involving the country in a war with the tyrants of Europe, a war which they fondly hoped would draw out heroic qualities, such as the ancient Greek Republics displayed in their contest with the Persian despotism. Events proved that there was some foundation for such a hope. But little practical sagacity could be expected from men who deliberately adopted such a

programme. For the rest the Girondists were individualists in politics and Voltairean in religion. Vergniaud was their most brilliant orator ; but the person who had most influence in directing the policy of the party was Madame Roland. This remarkable woman was the daughter of a working engraver, of somewhat irregular tastes and imagination. In her younger days she had wanted to enter a convent. Now, she had thrown herself into politics with a sort of religious fanaticism. Her wide reading, her intellectual power, her enthusiasm and tact and beauty gave her great influence with the Girondists, and if her political ideas can scarcely be described as very practical, they were at least more so than those of the other members of the party.

The Feuillants and the Girondists formed only a small minority of the Assembly. There were Radicals who denounced all war, and Radicals who were Socialists, and Radicals whose radicalism meant little more than a desire to rise to power by the support of the mobs. And above all, there was the great nondescript body who sat mostly in the Centre,¹ and swayed backwards and forwards according as, at any particular time, they were more dominated by fear of a restored feudalism and a restitution of the Church lands, or by fear of the mob and of socialistic legislation.

During the brief period of its existence, four questions kept pressing on the attention of the Assembly. What was to be done about the dissident priests ; and the emigrants ; and the continually growing distress ; and the German powers ? The latter were sheltering emigrants, allowing them to make military preparations, and demanding com-

¹ The Feuillants had definitely taken their seats on the Right. The Girondists sat on the Left, side by side with many who differed fundamentally from them.

pensation for those Germans who had suffered from the abrogation of feudal rights in the border provinces of France. The attitude of Austria and Prussia aggravated the danger from emigrants and dissidents. The scarcity and distress were similarly aggravated by the foreign and domestic disputes, and by the fears which these roused in the minds of business men.

Almost every dissident priest was a centre of disaffection in the parish where he had once ministered. The emigrants were even more openly conspiring against France. Yet when the Assembly passed decrees against either dissidents or emigrants, the King simply vetoed the decrees. His ministers belonged to the party not represented in the Assembly. The Executive and the Legislature were frequently and fundamentally opposed to one another; and the Constitution by its ingenious provisions for securing independence for both, soon began to break down under the strain of their opposition. There was no doubt something to be said for Louis and his ministers. The decrees against dissidents and emigrants violated the arrangements and compromises made by the late Constituent Assembly. The dissidents had paid the legal penalty of their dissidence. The emigrants had violated no legal duties by emigrating. The King sympathized with the ejected clergy. The ministers belonged to the aristocratic party. The right of veto had been deliberately entrusted to the sovereign, under definite limitations, after full discussion. Yet the broad fact remained that dissidents and emigrants were a peril to the nation; and that if the King persisted in using his power to protect them from the penalties and precautions which the representatives of the nation considered necessary, Royalty would become an unendurable element in the Constitution.

An even more serious matter was the attitude of the Court towards the foreign powers. The Queen's hopes came to be more and more fixed on intervention from abroad. Her brother the Emperor Leopold was the actual ruler of Austria, Hungary and Belgium, and the nominal head of all the German States. He was not displeased to see France weakened by internal divisions ; but he greatly dreaded the spread of revolutionary ideas from France into Germany ; and he felt bound to give his sister some help, if he could do so without involving himself in war. The Prussian King Frederick William was equally hostile to democracy, and of a somewhat less cautious and pacific temperament. But the traditional rivalry between Austria and Prussia made co-operation difficult ; and the spread of Russian influence made the two great German Powers unwilling to get involved in a French war. Polish and Turkish affairs were of more pressing interest to them than anything happening at Paris. They were ready to threaten, but not to strike. As early as August 1791, in the Convention of Pilnitz, they had declared that the restoration of order and the maintenance of the monarchy in France concerned all Europe ; that they meant to uphold the claims of those of their own subjects who had enjoyed feudal rights in France, and that they were prepared to intervene, if the other European powers would co-operate. This saving clause, however, was intended to make their declaration a mere threat. They knew that the English Government, directed by Pitt, was determined to maintain a peaceful policy, and that therefore no general European intervention was practicable. But the French were less well informed as to Pitt's views, and did not realize how completely the German Powers meant to shelter themselves behind their saving clause.

Accordingly in France the Declaration of Pilnitz was regarded as little short of a declaration of war. Yet Louis and his Ministers were making little preparation to resist an invasion. It was even suspected that such an invasion would be welcome to the Government.

In December 1791 the excitement in the Assembly and the country became so great that the King thought it necessary to intrust the War Ministry to some one whose patriotism would be beyond suspicion. He selected Narbonne, a young Feuillant, a friend of Lafayette. This appointment was followed by energetic efforts to organize the military resources of France ; and by a notification that the emigrants must not be allowed to continue their preparations on German soil ; and that the Declaration of Pilnitz was a violation of existing treaties. It looked as if Louis meant loyally to act in accordance with the national sentiments. But the impatient temper of the Queen soon threw everything into fresh confusion. Instead of cultivating the support of the Feuillants, who were genuinely loyal to the Monarchy, and anxious to resist the spread of democracy, she took advantage of the momentary popularity which the Government had gained, to insist on the dismissal of Narbonne, to whom this popularity was in a great measure due. The Assembly retorted by impeaching two of the other ministers. At this crisis Leopold died (March 1792). His successor Francis was less pacifically disposed. The emigrants were allowed to resume their preparations, and Louis again shifted his policy. To clear himself of the suspicion of sympathizing with the enemies of France, he invited two Girondists (Roland and Clavière) to join the ministry, and gave the Foreign Office to Dumouriez, a zealous advocate of war. Finally, on April 20th, he came down to the Assembly,

and with tears in his eyes invited its assent to a declaration of war against Austria. This was enthusiastically given. The members seemed to have forgotten their recent anxieties about the condition of the army and the national defences. They must have known that Prussia would join with Austria. But they had great trust in the revolutionary ideas. To the usual confidence of Frenchmen, they added a strong belief that the downfall of tyrannies was at hand. They thought that the common people would everywhere join hands against their rulers, and that the Revolution would spread throughout Europe.

Thus France entered, with a light heart, on a series of wars which lasted almost without intermission till the battle of Waterloo. It is difficult to apportion the responsibility for the outbreak. On the one hand it seems clear that the French had a right to settle their own affairs without foreign interference. If they chose to abolish feudal and ecclesiastical privileges, to limit royal power, or even to establish a republic, this was primarily their own affair, and they were justified in resenting foreign threats and dictation. On the other hand, it must be noticed that the French Revolution was in many ways aggressive. Its principles were cosmopolitan, and implied dangers to foreign governments. On the ostensible grounds of dispute, such as the question of compensation to Germans for the loss of ancient rights as landowners in French territory, and that of the liberty to be allowed to emigrants, each side had a fairly good case against the other. But the fundamental fact was the utter incongruity of the new ideas with the existing European institutions. Human nature being what it is, the war could scarcely be avoided ; and the proportion in which we shall distribute blame will depend, in the main, on the

extent of our sympathy with the revolutionary movement as a whole.

The war opened disastrously for France—Dumouriez had planned an invasion of Belgium, where the Austrian rulers were disliked by many of their subjects. It was hoped that these would rise at the first appearance of the French among them, and that the whole of the Austrian Netherlands might be annexed before any Austrian or Prussian armies could arrive to help the comparatively small force already in Belgium. But the French troops proved unequal to the task. Officers and men distrusted one another. The first army that crossed the frontier fell back at the sight of the enemy, and their retreat soon became a tumultuous flight. Thereupon the generals commanding the other armies of the north-east, durst not advance. Lafayette, who commanded the chief of these, seems to have suspected Dumouriez of jealousy, and of a desire to push him forward prematurely into a post of danger. At any rate, it was clear to him that the army equipments were bad, and that the temper of the troops was untrustworthy. So he refused to advance, and the projected invasion collapsed for the present. Further south, things were even worse. The general commanding the central army sent in his resignation, and the one who had been ordered to march on the Alps reported that his forces were quite unfit to take the field.

All parties in Paris tried to throw the responsibility of these failures on their rivals. The Assembly passed energetic measures against the emigrants and dissidents. They also decreed the formation of an army of volunteers for the defence of Paris. The King vetoed the decrees, and even dismissed the Girondist ministers. The Democrats

thereupon organized a mob rising. Thousands of armed and half-armed men broke into the Palace of the Tuilleries. The King tried to pacify them by putting on a red cap, which was now the recognized symbol of revolutionary ideas ; but he firmly refused to sanction the decrees which the Assembly had passed. At length Pétion, the Mayor of Paris, a prominent democrat, appeared on the scene, and persuaded the mob to disperse. This rising of June 20th provoked a temporary reaction. The middle classes and the majority of the Assembly were alarmed by the fact that the King's life had been endangered, and all authority set at naught. But the reaction was short-lived. The pressing fear of a German invasion outweighed in many minds the danger of disorder, and convinced many that the immediate need of France was the deposition of the King and the transfer of executive authority to patriotic hands.

At length on the 10th of August the crisis arrived. While the Moderates and even the Girondists were hesitating, the leading Democrats had made their preparations. In the dead of night the sections or wards of Paris met, and elected a new municipal council, or Commune. Under its authority the mob marched against the Tuilleries. The Assembly was hastily summoned to meet ; but only 284 of the 749 deputies ventured to attend. To them the King fled with his family. The palace was sacked. The Swiss guard who had fired on the assailants were many of them massacred, and then the mob made its way to the hall where the Assembly was sitting. The latter thought well, in these circumstances, to suspend the King and to issue orders for the election of a National Convention, by universal suffrage, in order to determine what was to be done next. Meanwhile they replaced the lately dismissed Girondist

ministers, and installed Danton, the chief organizer of the night's work, in the Ministry of Justice.

Thus the laborious Constitution of 1791 was practically overthrown on the 10th of August, 1792. The Girondists took the lead in the proceedings of the Assembly on this celebrated occasion. If they thus laid themselves open to the charge of submitting to mob intimidation, we must yet remember that they were carrying out a policy which they in the main approved of. The blame, if blame there be, must rest rather on the majority, which deliberately abstained from attending at this fateful meeting of the Assembly. The Girondists had deliberately adopted a Republican position; but their attempts to move in a Republican direction had hitherto been outvoted by the Feuillants and the Centre. These now mostly stood aside, and left the minority to speak in the name of the Assembly, to suspend Monarchy, nominate ministers, and establish universal suffrage as the arbiter of French destinies. Many excesses were committed on August 10th. But in the main our judgment on the events of that great day must depend on whether we consider that, with the country in such danger from foreign and domestic foes, it was safe to leave at the head of the Government, those whose hopes lay chiefly in the success of the invaders.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TERRORISTS.

THE 10th of August introduced what may be called the Second French Revolution. The condition of the country seemed almost desperate. One army had run away at the first sight of the Austrians. The others seemed either afraid or incompetent to face the enemy. Prussia had declared war in July. Various smaller German and Italian rulers soon followed this example. The attitude of Russia, Sweden, and Spain was decidedly hostile ; and it was not easy to see what allies could be hoped for. Even against such a coalition as was gathering against her, a united France might have done much. But France was not united. Some of her noblest born were taking part in the invasion. Others were known to sympathize with it. Dissident priests were fomenting disorder in almost every department. Even the patriots were disunited. Feuillants, Girondists, and Jacobins distrusted one another. Lafayette had tried to protect the King and overawe the Assembly. But the latter had finally yielded to pressure of a different sort. The Paris mob had proved more formidable than the commander of the chief army of France. So the King had fallen. But though this had removed one national

danger, there still seemed little chance of a successful defence.

The commander of the allied German armies was the Duke of Brunswick, a man trained in the military principles of the great Frederick, and generally regarded as the best general in Europe. He inaugurated his advance by publishing a proclamation full of confidence and insolence (July 26). He commanded the French to submit to their King, and threatened signal vengeance for any insults that might be offered to Louis. We have seen how Paris answered this manifesto on the 10th of August. But meanwhile the German armies were advancing. The treasury was bankrupt. The generals were suspected and suspicious. Many of them were disgusted at what was going on in Paris. The troops had neither discipline, nor confidence, nor the most necessary equipment. Defeat seemed certain; and defeat would mean a restoration of much of the old *régime*, an undoing of the Revolutionary work.

The feelings of the Girondists, who had deliberately laboured to bring on the war, may easily be imagined. Yet in them there was no thought of surrender. At the worst they could die for their country and their cause. We read of their leaders spreading out a map of France before them; consulting which way they shall retire if Paris has to be abandoned to the enemy; what corner of France will serve best for a last fight. But meanwhile there seems to them at least a chance that the enthusiasm of a free nation may be a match for the armies of invading tyrants; and to that enthusiasm the Girondists now appeal. Before the King's fall they had carried decrees declaring that the country was in danger, and summoning volunteers (*fédérés* they were

called) to form a camp of reserve, to defend Paris, and leave all regular troops free to serve on the frontiers. Vainly Louis had vetoed the decree. From many parts of the country armed volunteers came up to the capital. Marseilles sent its six hundred, selected as men who know how to die, and famous as the occasion of the great revolutionary Hymn—the Marseillaise. It was the presence of enthusiastic armed *fédérés*, which enabled the mob leaders so easily to overthrow the Government on August the 10th. Girondists and National Guards hesitated to strike or to defend. Respectable, moderate people shrank from the struggle. The minority, that knew what it wanted, was reinforced by zealots from all parts of France, and was able in a single night to overthrow the Constitution.

To repel the invaders might seem a harder task. But certainly France was not likely to lack defenders. Everywhere the proclamation, "Citizens, our country is in danger," was responded to by eager patriots. Women urged their husbands, sons, and lovers to enlist. Youths wept because they were accounted too young to die for France. So far as numbers go the armies were soon strong. But numbers and enthusiasm are not everything. They cannot, for instance, supply the place of discipline. The invaders of Belgium, in this very spring, had outnumbered their enemies, and had started full of enthusiasm; but confusion, suspicion, mutiny, and flight had characterized the campaign. The Girondists did well to consider in what last ditch they should die if they had nothing but patriotic enthusiasm to rely on, and especially if they could not find any cure for the mutual suspicions by which the French army and nation were being demoralized.

Such a cure was however to be provided, though not by

the Girondists. Men were now coming to the front who believed in *Terrorism* as a deliberate policy. If they could make it clear that a patriotic Government would account it a crime to fail or to be suspected; if patriot soldiers could be inspired with confidence that all treachery would be spied out and fiercely punished; they might cease to distrust their officers. The whole country might be committed to a desperate courage, by atrocities which the invaders would never forgive. Aristocrats might be frightened out of treachery. Moderates might be frightened out of the way of genuine patriots. Then enthusiasm would have a better chance. It would no longer be liable to yield to distrust.

It will now be well to introduce the men who played the chief part in carrying through this policy of Terrorism. *Marat* was the first of them who clearly conceived and openly advocated the programme of bloodshed. Born in 1743, he was almost fifty years of age when he first rose into political prominence. He had previously attained considerable scientific distinction, especially in optics. He had written too on metaphysical subjects, and was a most accomplished linguist. By profession a doctor, he had taken his M.D. at the University of St. Andrews. His early life had been studious and respectable, but gradually he had come to be possessed by an intense and furious pity for the poor, and a firm conviction that the evils of society were caused by aristocrats. His whole energies came to be devoted to the Revolutionary propaganda. His paper, *L'Ami du Peuple*, began to appear in the fateful year 1789. With steady persistency and no small ability, it preached the doctrine that the miseries of the poor were being aggravated by the rich from selfish motives, and that the cure for social evils must be of the sternest sort. "Two

hundred and sixty thousand heads of aristocrats" is his demand. "What man can say," he asks the poor, "he has a right to dine, when you have no bread?" He had known poverty himself, and risen to comparative comfort, and had now sunk to poverty again, sacrificing everything to the cause. With the logic and fanaticism of a scientific student, who cares little for the accepted commonplaces and prejudices and principles, he had made himself the mouthpiece of misery, suspicion, and anger. His indifference to bloodshed, or rather his belief in it, as a cure for all the evils of the country, has made Marat seem to many a sort of maniac with homicidal frenzy. But there was meaning, sense, and truth in much that he wrote and did. Only it was horribly one-sided, and neglectful of much that men may only neglect at their soul's peril. However, he had no lack of readers. His curiously suspicious temper, that made him distrust all prominent people, fitted in with a tendency of the age; and people got familiarized by him with the idea of a policy of severity, of striking down all who were suspected. Often he had to hide in cellars and sewers to escape the punishment due to atrocious proposals published in his paper. But his position gradually became stronger, especially after the outbreak of the war, and during the excitement caused by the earlier failures, and the supposed treachery of the Court, the Ministers, and the army officers. From the 10th of August he became one of the leading figures in the Revolutionary movements. In particular he, more than any one, influenced the policy of the men who usurped the position of municipal councillors (the Commune), and having thoroughly roused the mob, forced a half reluctant Assembly to suspend the King, and order the election of a National Convention by universal suffrage.

The second great advocate of the policy of Terrorism is *Georges Danton*. He too is a man with a conscience—of a sort. He has no love for bloodshed. But he says, "*Il faut faire peur*." It is necessary to frighten people. Like Marat, he has strong sympathies with the poor, but it is of a less scientific sort, and more human. He will support socialistic measures, where they seem wanted, but he is not a man of theories. His strength lies in the fact that he represents the new France which the Revolution is creating, self-confident even to recklessness, with an audacity that seems incredible, but which nevertheless is partly justified by the results. Danton is sixteen years younger than Marat, only thirty-five when he dies by the guillotine. By profession an advocate, he took no prominent part in the first movements of the Revolution. But gradually he became the most popular of the street orators, the leading spirit in the ultra radical club of the *Cordeliers*. His stentorian voice gave him a great advantage in open air oratory. The mob appreciated his genial, warm-blooded humour and courage, his freedom from scruples and pedantry, his energy and fervour. He was not, like Marat or Robespierre, an enthusiast for principles or ideas. He was less disinterested and self-sacrificing than they ; more ready to accept bribes ; more greedy of pleasure. But he was also more human and sympathetic. He had adopted the policy of Terrorism in a more limited form, as a temporary necessity, for frightening traitors and restoring confidence ; but we shall see that when the danger from invasion passed, he honestly attempted to put an end to atrocities.

Danton, like Marat, begins to have a direct influence on French affairs on the 10th of August, 1792. Hitherto his voice, like Marat's paper, had been a great source of disorder

and Revolutionary fervour. He seems to have taken an important share in the rising of the 10th; and it certainly resulted in raising him to the important post of Minister of Justice. Thenceforth his chief work was to inspire and direct the national defence. "We need audacity, and then more audacity, and audacity for ever," he said; and his chief claim to the gratitude of France was that he set her the example of greatly daring, and did much to secure that she should follow that example. Terrorism was one element of his policy. If it was necessary to frighten people, the greatly daring Danton was not likely to shrink from shedding blood.

The third of the great Terrorists was *Maximilian Robespierre*. He had risen to prominence before either Marat or Danton, but had shrunk more than they from the policy of bloodshed. Robespierre had indeed posed as a decided humanitarian. At school and college he was distinguished for industry and good conduct. Then he had some success as a provincial lawyer, and rose to be a provincial judge. In that capacity he had to record a death sentence. The victim was a murderer, condemned on ample evidence. But this taking part in sending a fellow-creature to death was too much for the sensitive feelings of the young judge, who had suffered agonies over the death of a favourite pigeon. He resigned his judgeship in order to escape the possibility of such duties, and resumed his work as a lawyer. With this he combined some literary labours. He was an ardent disciple of Rousseau, whom indeed he once made a pilgrimage to visit. Like his master, he was a sentimentalist and a socialist. He preached the doctrines of Rousseau in his native town of Arras, and when the States-General were summoned in 1789, he was chosen a representative of the

Third Estate in Artois. He went up to Paris an unknown man, lean, green, incorruptible, with no grace of person, and only moderate oratorical gifts. At first he spoke seldom, but one keen eye soon discerned what potentialities were in him. "That man will go far," said Mirabeau; "he believes every word he says." The prophecy showed characteristic shrewdness. Of all Rousseau's readers and admirers, this cadaverous-looking lawyer was the one who most fully believed in the new gospel, and set himself most sternly to realize it in practice. While other Radicals demanded war, Robespierre was strenuous for peace; and if circumstances led him into paths strangely inconsistent with his professed humanitarianism, he had at least a clear idea as to what he wanted, and it was in the supposed interests of humanity that he hardened his heart against individuals. For ordinary criminals he was full of compassion, believing them to be the victims of social injustices. For those who stood in the way of his political ideals he had small mercy; but even when he was ruthlessly bringing them to destruction, he was agonized by the thought that some innocent persons might suffer by mistake through the policy of Terrorism. In the first National Assembly he gained little distinction. Their labours at Constitution making seemed to him idle. For their great Constitution was not socialistic. He turned away from the debates of the Assembly and threw all his energy into speeches at the Jacobin Club. There he found some congenial spirits, and gradually rose to a dominant position. But he does not seem to have taken any active part on the 10th of August, though he was put on the new Commune.

For the other leading Terrorists a few words must suffice. There was St. Just, another disciple of Rousseau, fanatical

as Robespierre himself, but with less sentimentality, despite a face of almost womanly sweetness. There was Camille Desmoulins, most light-hearted of Revolutionists, with no cut-and-dried social theories, but full of fervour and patriotic enthusiasm, akin in many ways to Girondists rather than to Terrorists. But living in closer contact with the common people, he was less disposed than they to suppose that a Revolution could be carried through by fastidious gentlemen. Lastly, among the Terrorists were men of a far lower type than these five whom we have just mentioned; men to whom the Revolution meant an opportunity to gain wealth and power by the profession of radical and socialistic opinions. Such were Collot d'Herbois and Billaud Varennes, both of whom had been actors, writers of indecent verses, and adventurers of the lowest sort. They had now thrown themselves heartily into the policy of Terrorism, and were showing enough ability to win the support of the more desperate spirits in the Paris mob. Both of them had some talent for intrigue, and an unscrupulous selfishness which helped them to the front. In other respects they had very different characters. Billaud was a blustering savage. Collot hid his savagery under a mask of reserve. But both took prominent and similar parts in the days that were at hand.

The *coup d'état* of August 10th was soon followed by the far more terrible deeds of September 2nd, and the subsequent days. The Paris Commune, or Municipal Council, irregularly elected on August 10th (see page 68), was able, in the general confusion, to usurp almost absolute authority in the capital. Numbers of persons suspected of being favourable to the King and the enemies of the nation were by its authority flung into prison. Then the prisons

were visited by fierce mobs. The prisoners were brought out one by one. A few questions were asked. If the prisoners failed to satisfy the mob that they were not Royalist or aristocratic in their sympathies, they were promptly put to death, often in most horrible ways. At least a thousand persons were thus massacred.

If we attribute these September massacres to a sudden outburst of mob fury, fear, and suspicion, we may fairly regard them simply as an illustration of the condition to which the common people of Paris had been reduced under the old *régime*. Their characters had been formed, not in the few Revolutionary months, but during the long years and successive generations that preceded the outbreak. And we may even say that these, and the latter atrocities, prove how much the Revolution was needed, in order to destroy a social system which brutalized the masses to such an extent. It has, however, to be noticed that the massacres were deliberately stimulated by the Commune, of which Marat was now the guiding spirit. They were part of the deliberate policy we have described, a policy which no necessity could justify. It must, however, be admitted that the policy of Terrorism seems really to have produced the results which its authors aimed at. Since the 10th of August a great change had taken place in the temper of the French armies. The change was partly due to the ability of Dumouriez, who had hurried down to take the command of the chief army of defence. This had seemed altogether demoralized ; but under his wise policy it had occupied very strong positions in the passes of the Argonne forest. It held these passes, for three weeks, against the German invaders. Then Dumouriez had to fall back. But he stood at bay on the heights of Valmy (Sept. 20), and succeeded

in repelling the Prussian attack. The autumn rains had now come on. Dysentery had broken out in the Prussian army. Provisions were falling short, and Brunswick decided to retreat. The Austrian army followed this example. Dumouriez was then able to resume the invasion of Belgium, and by Dec. 2nd he had completely conquered the Austrian Netherlands.

It is difficult to say how far this startling change in the military situation was due to the adoption of the policy of Terrorism at Paris. Some of the credit must be given to Dumouriez's generalship. But there seems no reason to doubt that the improved temper of the troops was partly due to the knowledge that the supreme control of affairs had passed into the hands of men who would flinch from nothing, and would strike remorselessly at all who were suspected of treachery.

This does not justify the September massacres; which were indeed condemned by all but the most extreme Terrorists. The Girondists, whose republicanism and patriotism was beyond reproach, warmly denounced the massacres. Even Danton and Robespierre stood to some extent aloof, neither opposing nor taking part in them. Both these men seem to have been in the secret. Danton, as Minister of Justice, was specially bound to interfere. Robespierre, as a member of the Commune, was more directly responsible. Both thought it necessary and desirable to strike a severe blow at those whom they regarded as traitors. But at least they preferred to leave the horrible work to others. Marat, on the contrary, not only played a prominent part in the massacres, but glorified and justified them in the face of a hostile majority in the National Convention.

CHAPTER IX.

REGICIDE.

THE National Convention met on September the 22nd, 1792. France was declared a Republic on the same day. The Girondists seemed to have triumphed. They had got the war on which they had set their hearts; and the war was going well for France. They had got their Republic and Universal Suffrage. They occupied the chief offices of the State, and were directing the foreign and domestic policy of the country. But their position was most precarious. They had won it by calling in the help of the democracy, whose ideas were not theirs. The democracy had set its heart on many things; but especially on improving the conditions of existence for the poor. Prices must be kept down, and wages kept up—by force, if necessary. The Girondists were economists, some of them students of Adam Smith. Their political economy was narrow and defective; but it had at least taught them that neither prices nor wages depend on enactments of National Conventions; nay, that such enactments might defeat their own objects, and aggravate the poverty they were intended to cure. Again, the democracy was somewhat callous about the sufferings of upper-class people, at least if these sufferings

might contribute to the well-being of the masses. The Girondists, on the contrary, had the sensitiveness of educated men, and the scruples of idealists. The September massacres had filled them with horror, and they were eager to purge their new Republic of all complicity in such crimes. The democracy thought more of hunger than of law. They couldn't see that it was worth while attacking patriots, even if their patriotism had made them unduly eager to suppress aristocrats and traitors, such as they believed the September victims to have been. Was there not treachery to the Republic, in sympathy for Monarchists?

On this subject, there was much debating in the National Convention. At first, Marat was almost alone in venturing to defend the September massacres. When that "friend of the people" said that no doubt many in the Convention were hostile to him, there were loud cries of "All of us,—All of us." But this feeling gradually died out. Marat came to be tolerated, and, as time went on, to be even applauded. Debates on the massacres came to be regarded as a bore, an obstruction to business, a reviving of unpleasant incidents which, in the presence of national dangers, had better be buried in oblivion.

A more pressing question was "What shall be done with Louis, formerly King, now a prisoner?" So long as he remained in prison, his position was a constant stimulus to all the foreign and domestic foes of the Republic; and yet, if he were set free, he would naturally throw himself into the anti-revolutionary crusade. The Girondists soon found themselves in a logical difficulty. The Jacobins had begun by demanding that the late King should be tried. But the Constitution of 1791 had expressly provided Deposition as the punishment for such crimes as Louis was accused of; a

king who betrayed his trust was to lose his crown. Louis then had paid the forfeit. How could he be tried again, and punished by a punishment created *ad hoc*? But the Jacobins, who had been clamouring for a trial, suddenly changed their ground. They admitted that Louis could not properly be tried. They proposed, however, that he should be put to death by a Legislative Act, an Act of Attainder, as we should call it in England. The Girondists could not consistently deny the supremacy of the Legislature, or its right to determine whether any Frenchman's death was necessary for the national safety. Yet, if they shrank from an unconstitutional trial, they shrank still more from putting a man to death without any trial at all. They might praise such a course in a Brutus or a Harmodius, but they could not bring themselves to emulate the examples of these classical heroes. Accordingly they too shifted their ground, and began to advocate a trial, as the lesser evil. Long and fierce debates ensued. Members shook their fists in one another's faces, and were howled at by the mob in the streets, and from the galleries. At length, however, the Girondists so far prevailed that the Convention resolved to try Louis Capet.

On December 11th the ex-king appeared before the bar, to hear the charges brought against him. He did not dispute the competency of the tribunal; but he asked to be allowed the assistance of counsel. This obviously reasonable demand was only granted after an angry debate. In the trial which ensued, some sort of judicial forms were preserved. The King's advocate, De Sèze, made a brilliant defence. But his speech probably secured no single vote. It needed not his eloquence to prove that most of the acts, on the strength of which Louis was accused, were covered

by the amnesty passed by the Constituent Assembly, or had been legally expiated by his deposition. The prosecutors, in true eighteenth century fashion, were, in fact, going behind the laws of France, and appealing to supposed laws of nature. The offence Louis was accused of was treason to the nation, an offence not easy to define. But certainly he had intrigued against the National Will, and secretly corresponded with foreign powers who were hostile to the Revolution, and on the verge of war with France. He had, to some extent, dissociated his own interests from those of the nation, and though this was, in the circumstances, natural we cannot but account it a political crime. If we make due allowance for all the difficulties of his position, we shall not pass a harsh judgment upon him. But he had so distinctly failed to discharge the duties of a constitutional sovereign, he was so distinctly responsible for many of the evils from which the country was now suffering, that we cannot blame the Convention for regarding the question of his fate chiefly or solely in the light of national expediency. Their errors were, like his, political. They misjudged the situation in a way that may almost be described as criminal, and aggravated all the national dangers by condemning Louis to death. If any of them were animated in their votes by cowardice or personal ambition, they deserve of course, a still severer condemnation.

The actual voting on the Verdict was a somewhat complicated matter. The Girondists were anxious to shift the responsibility of decision from the Convention to the whole nation. They held that such an act as putting Louis to death, when he clearly had not, under the existing laws, incurred the death penalty, was too serious an act to be carried through by an Assembly which had not been directly

elected on this question. They were prepared to vote Louis guilty. But they demanded that the question of the penalty should be decided by an appeal to the people. There was, however, a large party in the Convention who desired to save the King's life, but cared comparatively little about the Appeal. The Paris mob had been roused to a state of fury, reminding men of the September outbreak. They had somehow been persuaded that the death of Louis would inaugurate the better days for the poor, so long looked for, but still delayed. Robespierre, St. Just, and the other fanatical Socialists, cared little for what the majority of the nation might wish. France must be saved, against its own will if necessary, by a socialistic republic. This would have the best chance of being established, if the mob of Paris could dominate the country. The execution of the King might embitter parties and alienate the moderate and respectable. So much the better for those who wanted to commit the Revolution to a war against private property, and the accumulation of individual wealth. Danton, on the whole, held the same view, though on different grounds. His interest was chiefly in the national defence. But with reckless audacity he wished to throw the King's head, as a gage of defiance, against the coalesced monarchs. Marat as usual was crying for more blood. Thus the leading Terrorists were all exciting the populace against the Appeal, and against those members of the Convention who hesitated to put Louis to death. To many deputies, the great thing seemed to be to avoid any prolongation of the existing situation. They accordingly voted against the Appeal, but in favour of imprisonment or exile. The Girondists, on the contrary, voted for the Appeal, but when that was defeated, they voted in favour of death.

This division of their opponents enabled the Terrorists to get their way. On the question of the King's guilt there was a unanimous vote. On the question of the Appeal, 283 voted *Yes*; 424 voted *No*. On the question of the penalty, a bare majority of one voted for death, pure and simple. The majority included most of the Girondists, and some others who had voted for an appeal to the people. On the final division, a majority of 380 against 310 rejected all postponement of the execution.

Louis had borne, with patient fortitude, the insults and hardships of his imprisonment. With the same patient fortitude he now met his death. Adversity brought out an unexpected element of passive heroism and genuine piety in his character. He fell, chiefly through the sins of his ancestors, though partly, no doubt, through his own shortcomings, and partly through unreasonable hatreds and suspicions, and hopes of what the people would gain by the death of the so-called tyrant.

If we compare his execution with that of our own Charles I., we shall notice that, while the latter was the act of a determined minority, who by military force were able to purge Parliament of most of its members, the former was a national act, carried through after long discussion by the representatives of the nation, elected by universal suffrage. It had therefore whatever justification legality could give it. It is likely enough that if the Girondists had carried their appeal to the people, the decision might have been different. But the absence of a *plébiscite* could not deprive the execution of a national character. Those who had abstained from voting for members of the National Convention had only themselves to blame, if the Assembly did not properly reflect French opinion. But an act does not

become right because it is sanctioned by the delegates of universal suffrage ; and the execution of Louis, like that of Charles, is blameworthy, not only because it was disproportioned to the moral guilt of the deposed sovereign, and because it involved a breach of existing laws, but especially because its tendency was to strengthen reactionary forces and many of the evils from which the two countries were suffering. It is right to set against this, the undoubted advantage of bringing home to rulers, in a lurid fashion, the fact of their responsibility (whatever laws or constitutions may say) to man as well as to God, for the use they make of their powers. Nevertheless, on the whole, the wiser course would have been to banish the deposed King. Later experience has shown that the danger to a nation from exiled sovereigns is not very great, unless the sovereign be a man of unusual ability, energy, and craft. Nothing that Louis could have done in exile would have strengthened the enemies of France so much as did his death. In particular it was the main cause of the declaration of war between England and France.

Other causes no doubt co-operated. The English Government was still mainly aristocratic ; and though the middle classes had already attained considerable influence in our country, these were not more favourably disposed towards socialistic and revolutionary principles than the nobility themselves. There was a somewhat superfluous panic on the subject. Even the mobs in our large towns were on the whole untouched by the ideas that had proved themselves so potent in France. When they rioted, it was generally against Papists or Dissenters, not against the Sovereign or the Established Church. But a few radicals were making themselves heard, and were rousing among

the propertied classes fears quite disproportioned to their numbers or influence. One of them, Priestley, had had his house set on fire by a Birmingham mob. Another, Price, had preached a sermon which had been fiercely criticized by Burke in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*. In the growing manufacturing towns, the discontent of the workmen with the conditions of life under the new Factory System sometimes took a political form. But in the main the Whigs were almost as conservative as the Tories. The latter had a decided majority in Parliament, and had pretty easily defeated the reforming projects of their own leader Pitt. And, if Parliament did not properly represent the people, these seemed pretty indifferent on the subject. It appears, therefore, that the fear inspired by the supposed spread of revolutionary ideas, and by the propagandist spirit of the French leaders, was somewhat superfluous. But it was none the less real and deeply felt. Burke's *Reflections* had been widely read, and the upper and middle classes were very hostile to the French Revolution, long before the execution of Louis.

Quite apart from this political hostility, the progress of the French army in the Netherlands had aroused much disquiet. We have seen that Dumouriez had conquered Belgium; and English statesmen could not view this conquest with indifference. The annexation of Belgium would evidently facilitate an invasion of England in any future war with France; and, even if Belgium were formed into a nominally independent republic, it would not be strong enough to resist a French occupation, even if it should desire to do so. But not content with occupying Belgium, the French were pursuing an aggressive policy towards Holland. In deliberate violation of existing

treaties, the Convention had proclaimed the free navigation of the Scheldt, a measure which, however just and reasonable in itself, would greatly damage the trade of the Dutch ports. Dumouriez even wished to invade Holland, and his views were supported by many leading members of the Convention. The breach of treaties gave England a decent pretext for war, if she wished to avail herself of it ; and the progress of French influence in the Netherlands constituted a real danger to our country.

Nevertheless Pitt was so sincerely anxious to maintain peace with France, and the latter was so plainly interested in not adding England to the number of her foes, that some arrangement might have been made, if the execution of Louis had not roused the anti-revolutionary zeal of our upper and middle classes to an uncontrollable violence. The horror already excited by the September massacres was greatly increased by an act which was really far less horrible than they. When the news of the execution reached London, theatres were closed ; people put on mourning ; Frenchmen were insulted in the streets. Pitt was forced to take up a hostile attitude, by the pressure of his own followers, and of the vast majority of the Opposition ; and within a fortnight from Louis's execution, war had been declared by both nations. Holland, Spain, Portugal and several Italian states joined the Coalition at about the same time. France had alarmed all her neighbours by her aggressive policy. While Dumouriez was conquering Belgium, another French army had overrun Savoy and Nice. French agents had gone to Spain, as to England, with the deliberate object of rousing rebellions, and though Spain was in a deplorably weak condition, it could scarcely abstain from joining the Coalition.

The tide of success now began to turn against the French

armies. The force which had invaded Germany was driven back to the Rhine; and Dumouriez endured a serious defeat at Neerwinden (March 18th). He had for some time been disgusted with the proceedings of the Convention at Paris; and he now resolved to betray the Republic. He thought he could carry his army with him. But though he had roused much loyalty for himself, the troops were loyal first of all to France. They were full of the enthusiasm which had from the first animated the Revolutionary army. It only remained for the general to desert. Accompanied by a few officers, amongst whom was young Louis Philippe, son of Orleans, one day to be citizen king of France, he fled to the Austrian ranks.

Thus the Republic lost the one general who had shown any conspicuous military ability, at the very time when the armies of the coalition were pressing in on all sides. The financial position of France was also very serious. The taxes for the year 1792 fell far short of what had been estimated, and the Government saw no better plan for meeting the deficit than fresh issues of assignats. These were steadily falling in value. A note for 100 francs was only worth 60 francs in silver. Prices had about doubled, except where they were artificially kept down. But in most parts of France, the municipalities were either buying corn and selling it cheap, or were spending money in more roundabout ways for the same purpose. In Paris especially, the Commune was spending 12,000 francs *daily* in keeping down the price of bread. The money came, of course, from the pockets of the tax-payers, and as the Convention contributed liberal grants, it is clear that France was being taxed for the good of the Paris mob. The Convention in its early days abolished the salaries of the

clergy. It thus saved 70 millions annually ; but only by a flagrant breach of public faith (see page 49), and at the cost of alienating the Constitutional clergy. The one bright spot in the situation was that the rate of wages kept up, or rather rose more than proportionally to the rise of prices, so that a labourer was actually better off when he could get work, than in the previous years. But employment was very irregular. The war had involved an immense demand for men, but the tampering with the currency had so disorganized trade, that, in spite of the requirements of the army, scarcity of work was still common. The upper and middle classes suffered terribly. Many were reduced to poverty by the disorganization of trade and the burden of taxation ; but the socialists were not much troubled by this. They did not see that the comparative prosperity of the labourers was artificial, and could not be kept up, if capital was exhausted, and commercial enterprize checked.

CHAPTER X.

THE FALL OF THE GIRONDISTS.

WHEN Louis was executed, the Girondists still occupied the chief posts of the Ministry; and in the days that followed they could often command a majority in the Convention. Their cry was still for liberty. Though they had accepted many socialistic proposals, they were individualists at heart; and one of their next steps was to propose a new constitution, of a very democratic character, but under which the rights of property were to be safeguarded, and liberty was to be secured for capitalists and landlords, as well as for other people. To this the Socialists were resolutely opposed; but the great struggle between the two parties was delayed for a time by the attitude of Danton. Indifferent to abstract political principles, this clear-eyed statesman saw that if the enemy was to be repulsed, France must have a strong executive. To the astonishment of many, he now proposed that the Convention should have absolute power, and should appoint a committee of public safety with power to over-ride the ministers themselves. Robespierre brought forward a similar proposal in another department of government. He suggested the formation of a Revolutionary Tribunal,

with power to condemn any one to death, without help of a jury, or any of the regular forms of law. These startling proposals were not at first accepted. A committee of Public Safety was appointed, but its functions were limited to inquiry and criticism. A Revolutionary Tribunal was also set up, but it was to retain trial by jury. Marat had suggestions that were more promptly acted upon. He circulated bills advising the people to plunder a few shops, and hang up a few usurers. The hint was quickly taken, and it looked for a time as if Paris was to be pillaged; for the Commune, which controlled the police, and the only armed forces of the capital, declined to interfere with the rioters, unless the Convention would grant an additional three millions of public funds to be spent on the poor of Paris. The Convention, however, at length yielded to this demand; and then some sort of order was restored.

The attitude of the three leading Terrorists was eminently characteristic. Danton as usual was aiming at increased efficiency of the executive, and cared little for political principles. Robespierre was bent on suppressing opponents, but wished to do so in a more or less orderly and regular fashion. Marat was so absorbed in compassion to the poor, that he had lost all sense of justice and law.

Danton was at this time anxious to conciliate Moderates and Girondists. But these declined his proffered alliance. They considered him implicated in the September massacres, and they disliked his tendency towards despotism, which was indeed utterly opposed to their own programme. So he was thrown back on his own allies, and the Jacobins were once more united for a time.

Then began the final duel. "Let no man," says Carlyle, "ask history to explain how this business proceeded. This

battle of Mountain¹ and Gironde, and what follows, is the battle of fanaticism and miracles, unsuitable for cause and effect. The sound of it to the mind, is as the hubbub of voices in distraction." The contest was nominally waged in the Convention; but was greatly influenced not only by mob threats, but also by the two organized Radical bodies, the Commune with Marat as its guiding spirit, and the Jacobin Club, where Robespierre was now the most popular leader. The former controlled the military force of Paris; while the latter could, by means of its elaborate organization, provoke a popular demonstration at any moment. In the Convention, the Centre (or Plain as it was now called) could give a majority to either party.

In comparatively quiet times it generally supported the Girondists; but it was not prepared to offer any very strenuous opposition to the Paris democracy. Its leader was Barère, a fluent orator, who had sat in the States-General, and been mixed up in discreditable intrigues both with the Court and with the Duke of Orleans. He had latterly voted on most occasions with the Girondists, and had violently denounced the attempted domination of Paris over France. He had been elected on the Committee of Public safety; and his fluency of tongue and pen led to his being generally made the mouth-piece of that body. His reports and speeches were at once rhetorical and lucid. But he seems to have been utterly without principle, and to have attached himself to whatever party or individual was likely to prove the stronger. At present he hesitated between the Girondists and the Jacobins. When delegates from the

¹ This name seems to have been first given to the extreme Radicals in the Legislative Assembly, from the fact that they sat on the upper benches.

Paris wards demanded that the leading Girondists should be expelled from the Convention, he proposed the appointment of a commission of twelve members with power to arrest any one who should conspire against the Convention, and with special instructions to investigate the conduct of the Commune. But the appointment of this commission led to the formidable riots of May 31st. And Barère then proposed the suppression of "the Twelve." This pacificatory policy, and the hostile attitude of a section of the Paris people, brought the rioting to a temporary end. But on June 2nd, a fresh and better organized attack was made on the Convention. It was planned by Marat, authorized by the Commune, and carried through by the armed force of the city, under the command of Henriot. The approaches to the Tuilleries were all occupied. No deputy was allowed to leave the house till the demands of the Radicals were accepted.

The Convention ordered the troops to retire. But the command was treated with contempt. Then the deputies tried to depart, but were ignominiously driven back to their deliberations. They decided to yield, and to place the leading Girondists under arrest. A list of victims was drawn up. It was amended by Marat, and carried by the Convention in its amended form.

Thus the extreme party triumphed at Paris. But it was still to be seen whether France would submit. Marseilles and Lyons had already risen against the Jacobin domination. The Government Commissioners, sent down to Marseilles to enforce the Conscription, were ordered by the municipality to leave the city.

The Jacobin club at Marseilles was forcibly closed, and its leaders were arrested as robbers and murderers, for having

followed the example of the metropolitan Jacobins in promoting riots and the plunder of shops. Lyons soon followed the example. Here the Commissioners refused to obey the Municipal order that they should depart. A street fight ensued. Artillery was used on both sides. The Moderates were victorious.

A still more formidable opposition to the Republican Government had broken out in the west of France. The citizens of Marseilles and Lyons were chiefly animated by a desire to protect their property from socialistic and riotous aggressions. But the movement in the West was largely due to religious and royalist sentiments. The departments of La Vendée and Deux Sèvres were the most purely agricultural and pastoral in France. The old nobility of those regions had been to a great extent a resident aristocracy, exercising a rude, but not always unkindly despotism over the peasants. There were no big towns, no Jacobin clubs, no pamphleteers or mob orators in those primitive regions. The influence of the priests was considerable ; and these with the landowners had been able for a long time to keep their part of the country almost untouched by the Revolutionary Movement. In the days of the Constituent Assembly, when the Civil Constitution was being imposed on most of the clergy, and many parishes had become scenes of riot between the two ecclesiastical parties, there had been comparative quiet in these out-of-the-way parts of France. The Dissidents kept their places, in defiance of law. There were neither revolutionary officials, nor Revolutionary mobs to enforce the decrees of the Assembly. We have seen that the Constitution of 1791 had left much (too much) to local authorities. If these chose to ignore or break the laws of the land, there was little effective provision for enforcing

obedience. The peasants meanwhile naturally knew little of what was going on in Paris. They heard what the priests told them; but they showed little readiness to embark in an anti-revolutionary crusade, till the Conscription gave them personal reasons for objecting to the Republican Government.

This was in the spring of 1793. The defeat and treachery of Dumouriez was followed by a decree of the Convention that an army of 300,000 men should be levied by a general conscription. Commissioners were sent down to every part of France to enforce the levy. They provoked, as we have seen, considerable resentment, even in radical places like Marseilles and Lyons. But in La Vendée and its neighbourhood there was still more violent opposition. The peasants naturally resented being dragged from their homes to fight for that Revolution which they had been taught to regard as the handiwork of Satan. The Commissioners were forcibly resisted in several villages. National Guards were sent down to support them. But the opposition spread; and soon the whole coast, for a hundred miles south of the Loire mouth, was in armed rebellion.

The movement at first was a purely popular one. But the Royalist gentry soon joined it. They had the good sense to consent to serve under those of the peasant leaders who had shown military capacity in the conflicts with the National Guards, or had secured, in other ways, the confidence of their class. The priests threw themselves enthusiastically into the movement; and in a few weeks all trace of Republican authority had been swept away in a large region.

All this occurred before the arrest of the Girondists on June 2nd, 1793. This event was the signal for a far more widely spread rising. Several of the Girondist deputies were

not arrested ; others had made their escape. These now appealed to France against the Paris Jacobins ; and their appeal seemed at first likely to be successful. Bordeaux, capital of the Gironde department, at once took up the cause of its representatives. Marseilles and Lyons, already in revolt, sent in their adhesion. The fugitive deputies made Caen, in Normandy, the head-quarters of their movement, and were soon able to boast that they had promises of support from 72 out of the 88 departments. Meanwhile, the invaders, rolled back for a time, were again pressing in. The English, under the Duke of York, with the Austrians under Coburg, had taken Valenciennes, and thus opened the way to Paris from the north-east. German troops had crossed the eastern frontier and taken Mainz. Spaniards were invading from the south, and Piedmontese from the south-east. Lastly, Paris was divided against itself. The middle-classes of the capital had at length been alarmed into resisting the tyranny of the mob, and were now disputing the supremacy of the Jacobins in most of the sections or wards.

At this crisis Marat was assassinated (July 13th, 1793). As leader of the Commune and President of the Jacobin Club, he had taken the chief part in planning and directing the riots in Paris. His name was specially associated with the September massacres, the plundering of shops, and the rising of June 2nd. Against him, therefore, the indignation of those who sympathized with the Girondists was chiefly directed.

Amongst these was Charlotte Corday, a beautiful and enthusiastic young woman, who had been "a Republican before the Revolution." Her home was at Caen, where the fugitive Girondist deputies had established their headquarters. She had long cherished dreams of human per-

fectibility, and had hated the name of Marat, as the chief of those who were bringing discredit on the holy cause of Liberty. If anything could have added to her enthusiasm, it would have been the brief intercourse which she now enjoyed with the eloquent Girondist fugitives, who shared in her ideals and her hatreds. Making no confidants, she took the diligence for Paris, purchased a butcher's knife, and found her way to the house of citizen Marat. The citizen was too ill to see any one. She wrote to demand an interview, professing to have important information to give. No notice was taken of her letter. But by desperate persistency, she at length gets admission into the presence of the man of whose crimes she has heard so much. She begins to give her information, and as Marat writes down the names of those she professes to be accusing, the knife is suddenly plunged into his heart, and the career of the People's Friend is for ever ended.

Such is Charlotte's remedy for the ills of France. Marat's had been "blood of aristocrats"; hers is "blood of Marat." Both remedies had now been tried, but the ills were still uncured. As for Charlotte, they led her, unresisting, to prison. She had foreseen what her fate would be; and made no attempt to escape it. Brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, she bids them not waste time on details. She acknowledges that she killed Marat, and glories in the act. For the rest she declines all priestly help, and smiles calmly beautiful at the guillotine. Her body is flung into the felon's pit; while Marat's is borne aloft, amid the city's lamentation, to the Pantheon, where the great of France repose.

They are types, these two, of much that was going on; martyrs, both of them, in their several ways. Murderer and

murderess, ugly and beautiful, their fanaticisms were not so very different, at bottom. They were both disciples of Rousseau, and used many of the same phrases, and hoped many of the same hopes. Yet, mutually destructive, they bring each other to death.

We turn back to the larger conflict, with the Mountain on one side, and half a dozen European Powers and seventy-two departments (more or less heartily) on the other. Now, if ever, is the time for Danton to show what audacity can do. In this hour of danger no one cares to dispute with him for pre-eminence. He pushes business forward with extraordinary energy. In one fortnight a new Constitution is drawn up, accepted, and suspended. This Constitution of 1793 is perhaps the most democratic Constitution ever given (even nominally) to a great nation. Not only was it based on manhood suffrage, pure and simple; but it actually provided that every measure of the Central Legislative Body was to be submitted for approval to the 44,000 communes of France; and this, though the Legislature was to be renewed every year. Officials and magistrates were, on the same principle, not only to be elected by universal suffrage, but to be re-elected at short intervals, so as to keep them in strict subordination to the Sovereign People.

The Constitution of 1793 was, however, intended for show, and not for use. Its main object was to detach waverers from the Girondist revolt, by convincing them that the Jacobins did not regard the supremacy of Paris as anything but a temporary necessity. France was to be self-governed—when the present crisis was over. But no one knew better than Danton that the immediate need was for a strong executive, backed indeed by national enthusiasm,

but not embarrassed by national criticism or constitutional forms. So the Constitution was suspended as soon as it had been adopted, and we may here remark that it never came down from its state of suspension. The actual government of France, and especially the management of the war, was entrusted to the Committee of Public Safety, who proceeded under Danton's leadership to attempt a *levée en masse*. The whole nation was summoned to help in the defence of France. The young must fight. The married men must forge arms, transport baggage and artillery, or collect provisions. The women must make tents and clothes for the soldiers, and attend to the wounded. Those too old to work must excite the courage and patriotism of their juniors. Work must be found even for the children. Meanwhile national buildings are to be converted into barracks; public squares into workshops; all saddle-horses are requisitioned for cavalry; draught-horses for artillery. In short, France is to be turned into a vast camp.

Such is the policy of the Committee of Public Safety as expounded by Barère, who was now a zealous Dantonist, and the regular mouthpiece of the Committee. It need scarcely be said that this programme was not literally carried out. But an immense and widespread enthusiasm was created. The Paris mob was kept comparatively quiet by a measure under which poor citizens received pay for discharging their political duties. Thus the Government was able to throw its whole energy into its military preparations, and it soon had fourteen armies in the field, containing nearly a million soldiers.

Against Danton's energy, the revolted departments made but a poor stand. The Girondists had plenty of enthusiasm;

but their followers were mostly respectable middle-class people, who had joined the revolt from fear of Socialism, but were not prepared to run any considerable risks. Moreover, the revolvers had no common programme. Royalists and Reactionists were associated with Girondists who had voted for the death of Louis, and *bourgeois* who had gained much from the earlier Revolutionary measures. Above all, patriotic Frenchmen feared that by joining the revolvers they would aid the invaders. The Jacobins might have usurped their authority; but they were the actual Government of France, and as such they appealed to the national patriotism. Lyons and Toulon held out for some time. The Vendéans gained several victories. But in other parts of France the opposition collapsed after very little fighting.

Danton's raw levies would scarcely have been so successful against the regular troops of the Coalition, but fortunately for France dissensions had broken out among the invading powers. The long-standing rivalry between Austria and Prussia had been for a time suspended through the fear and hatred which the Revolution aroused. But the co-operation was never very hearty; and fresh grounds of suspicion and jealousy were constantly arising. The second partition of Poland (1793) was of more pressing importance to them than the war with France. It looked in July as if only a little energy was needed to enable the allies to reach Paris. But the energy was not forthcoming. The English were attacking distant colonies, and spreading their own empire and maritime supremacy. The Spanish and Piedmontese Governments were in financial difficulties. Accordingly, the invasions were nowhere vigorously pushed forward, and the French gained valuable time, during which their new troops

were disciplined and organized, without losing their enthusiasm. The work of organization was chiefly entrusted to Carnot, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and was carried through by him with great ability. Competent generals were now being discovered, chiefly among men of low birth. Hoche began life as a groom, Jourdan as a small shopkeeper. The Revolution had given splendid opportunities for rising from the ranks, and this naturally gave a great stimulus to soldiers and officers alike. But the results of the new system belong to a later period.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE EXTREMISTS.

THE victory of the Jacobins over the Girondists was speedily followed by the shelving of the man to whom that victory was chiefly due. Danton had long been distrusted by his old colleagues. He had tried to ally himself with the Girondists; and even after these had repelled him, his influence had been used against useless and indiscriminate slaughter. He was not a man of much delicacy. He had even connived at the September massacres; but he now thought that terrorism had done its work. France was fairly roused. Traitors had been duly frightened; and if more severity was necessary, he wished at least to make distinctions. He would not concur in the proposal to execute Marie Antoinette, or those of the Girondists who had taken no active part in the rebellion. His policy was to strike down all who resisted, but to treat with leniency those who submitted. This policy by no means suited those fanatics who could not believe that their social and political dogmas would fail to cure the ills of France; or that those opposed to their ideas could deserve any better fate than death. A policy of conciliation was equally hateful to those who made a trade of terrorism, and whose

power depended on the skill with which they stimulated the suspicions and passions of the mob. Both those classes were tolerably numerous in the Convention; and so when the term of office of the Committee of Public Safety expired, in July 1793, Danton was not re-elected. This change in the Committee was soon followed by a change of policy. The measures against the enemy were carried on with the old vigour, but all idea of lenity was at once abandoned.

Among the first victims of this change of rulers was Marie Antoinette, or as she was now called, the widow Capet. Her son was taken from her, entrusted to the tender mercies of a drunken cobbler, who alternately beat and intoxicated the lad, and probably hastened his death by ill-treatment, though there have been rumours that the prince somehow escaped, and lived thenceforth in obscurity.

The widow Capet was next tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal, on charges some of which were frivolous, while the rest seem to have been utterly unfounded. But the verdict of guilty and the sentence of death were foregone conclusions. She, whose whole life had once been a round of gaieties, was now a gray-haired widow, gray-haired before her time. It was kindest perhaps to end her sorrows, though those who passed the sentence had no thought of kindness. Adversity had done its worst and best for her; and she met her fate in a manner that atoned for many follies and faults.

The imprisoned Girondists were among the next victims. They who had been the first openly to attack Royalty in the Legislative Assembly were now accused of Royalism. They who were ready to die for France were accused of treason. It was felt that their eloquence might be too dangerously convincing. So their speeches were cut short. The

Tribunal is satisfied of their guilt, and does not need to hear their defence ; and so they are condemned, half heard, to die. They meet death in cheerful pagan fashion. One stabs himself. Another has some poison, but not enough to go round. So he flings it away. Their last meal is brightened by eloquence, wit, and song. As they drive to execution, they echo back the shout of the mob, "Long live the Republic." At the foot of the scaffold they sing, for the last time, their beloved Marseillaise. Head after head falls into the fatal basket. Fewer and fewer grow the voices. This hymn has become a duet, a solo, and then there is silence. The Revolution (as Vergniaud says) is swallowing her own children.

In this same October Lyons surrendered to the Jacobin army, after a desperate struggle ; almost the only really desperate bit of fighting which the heterogeneous revolvers—Girondists, Royalists, and Respectables—did. The siege lasted seventy days. A furious cannonade was kept up by the besiegers. The Arsenal was struck, and a hundred houses were destroyed by its explosion. The Hospital was battered down, and many of the sick were buried alive under its ruins. Famine set in. Women and children were turned out, but driven back by the Jacobin troops. Yet, even in this desperate struggle, the revolvers found time to quarrel with one another. There was a Girondist party and a Royalist party within the walls. The latter triumphed, and ordered the Bourbon flag to be hoisted. Then the Girondists refused to fight under the Royal banner. Offers to capitulate are made. The besiegers will accept nothing but an unconditional surrender ; and it comes at length to this. A last desperate sally fails, and then Lyons yields at discretion.

The Jacobin Government determined to make a terrible example. They decreed the absolute destruction of the city, the absolute extermination of its inhabitants; and though this was not literally carried out, there was much further destruction and much guillotining and shooting down of groups of victims.

Even more terrible was the vengeance wrought on the peasants of La Vendée. These had for a time been able to hold their own against the Government forces, which were indeed of a very irregular sort. At length, however, an army of 17,000 men, who had surrendered to the Austrians at Mainz (July 1793), and had then been bound over not to serve again against the Coalition, were utilized to suppress the westerly revolt. After some desperate fighting the peasants were completely routed. The army was then divided into twelve columns, with orders to march through the district, setting fire to every village, and slaughtering all the inhabitants. This provoked, as might have been expected, fresh resistances, which led to fresh atrocities; but we must postpone what little has to be told of these. For the present it must suffice to say, that by the end of 1793 there was no longer open resistance, of army against army, from any section of Frenchmen. The Catholic and Girondist rebellions had alike been suppressed. Toulon was the last place in France to hold out against the Government. Here the besieged had called in help from the enemies of France. An English fleet and a garrison of Spaniards and Italians came to their assistance. As at Lyons, there were two parties in the town. The English sympathized with the Girondists; the Spaniards and Italians sympathized with the Royalists. There were constant disputes between the two sections. But the siege was so badly conducted that it

dragged on till December. A Corsican officer, Captain Buonaparte, came down in September, and at once indicated to the French commander a new plan of operations. Six miles to the west of Toulon a promontory runs out into the sea, and then bends round opposite to Toulon. If this were utilized, the position of the English fleet would become untenable. So Buonaparte pointed out, and got snubbed for his pains ; but not being a man to submit to a snubbing, he wrote up to Paris. His plan was approved. The commander was removed. The promontory was occupied. The English fleet sailed away, taking with it the garrison and the citizens who had taken the chief part in the defence. It was hoped that thus the Jacobins would be deprived of their victims. Nevertheless, when the place yielded, there were the usual fusilladings and guillotinings.

However, the Republic had now suppressed its domestic foes ; and the tide of victory had already turned against the foreign invaders. In July 1793, after the fall of Mainz and Valenciennes (see page 98), it looked as if an advance on Paris was imminent, and likely to be successful. But divided councils were already threatening the stability of the Coalition. The Austrians thought that a determined invasion might unite Frenchmen, and that the great object of the Allies should be to encourage dissensions in the Republic. Prussia took a somewhat similar view, but advocated an expedition to La Vendée, in support of the revolt just then at its height. England objected to being associated with this reactionary Catholic movement, and was chiefly anxious to extend the British empire by the capture of distant French colonies. Austria and Prussia had quarrels of their own, which they hoped to settle by negotiations ; and they thought it best not to hurry the victory (which they

regarded as certain) till they had arranged how the spoils were to be divided ; and each member of the Coalition wished the others to bear the chief burdens, while it secured the chief advantages ! Presently Prussia learnt that Austria had concluded a secret treaty with England, and meant to offer a resolute opposition to Prussian annexations in Poland. This brought ill-feeling to a climax, and Prussia withdrew from the Coalition.

All this time the French armies were growing and improving. The Jacobin Government was recklessly dismissing all officers suspected of reactionary tendencies, even when there was no better ground for suspicion than that the officers were gentlemen by birth. In ordinary circumstances such a policy would have been ruinous. But it fitted in with and stimulated the prevailing enthusiasms ; and it provided places for the able men who were rising from the ranks. The first important movement in the autumn of 1793 was an attempt of the English and Dutch armies to capture Dunkirk. In this they were thwarted by General Houchard, who made, however, so many blunders, that he was replaced by Jourdan, once a pedlar, and still scarcely able to spell. His badly-spelt dispatches illustrate his lack of education ; and he keenly felt his own ignorance of the art of war. But he proved more than a match for the high-born, well-trained, and incompetent generals of the allies ; and he soon followed up the relief of Dunkirk, by gaining the victory of Wattignies over the Austrians (October 16th).

Further south, by the Moselle, France was still more fortunate in its general. Jourdan, though brave and energetic, had nothing that could be called military genius. But Hoche, the ex-groom, was a born general. In theory a Republican and a disciple of Rousseau, his instincts were

despotic, and he had a soldier's contempt for politicians who meddle in military matters. He more than once disregarded the instructions he received ; and in so doing must have known that he was risking his neck ; but the results justified his audacity and self-confidence. When thwarted by General Pichegru, who commanded the nearest French army, Hoche wrote to head-quarters, throwing up his command. He was greatly disliked by several of the Jacobin leaders ; but his ability was now so manifest, that they durst not accept his resignation. They ordered Pichegru to carry out Hoche's plans. There followed a brilliant march through the Vosges, which made the position of the allies in Alsace untenable, and proved the wisdom of Hoche's appointment. This was in December 1793, the same December in which Toulon fell.

Thus the year closed with victories for the Republic over foreign and domestic foes. In Paris, however, confusion and discord were reigning, and the struggle was aggravated by the coming to the front of an atheistic Anarchical party, who were known as *Communists*, because it was part of their policy that every *Commune* in France should be, to a great extent, self-governed. The most prominent member of this party was Hébert, the editor of *Père Duchesne*, a paper which combined obscenity and blasphemy with a programme as sanguinary as that of Marat. Since the death of "the People's Friend," Hébert had been the favourite with the most violent section of the mob. He had also succeeded to much of Marat's influence over the Commune. The Government had not been ashamed to utilize his scurrilities. They had spent more than a million of francs in circulating them in the army and the departments. From August 1793 they began to see with alarm

his progress towards a position independent of them, as leader of an anarchical party. But at that time they needed his help in pushing forward their policy of Terrorism. He appeared as a witness against Marie Antoinette, bringing against her a foul, and no doubt mendacious charge. In November there were dozens of political executions. Amongst the victims were Bailly, who had presided at the great Tennis-Court meeting of June 1789 (see page 22); and the Duke of Orleans, once considered the very leader of the Revolutionists; and Madame Roland, faithful to the last to those ideals in whose name she was being executed.

In the guillotining of suspected persons, the Committee, the Convention, and the Commune were agreed. But the attacks on Christianity, which began in the same November, were chiefly the work of Hébert and his friends. One of the latter, Chaumette, availed himself of his municipal office to forbid all religious services outside the churches. Then the Archbishop of Paris, accompanied by a number of priests, publicly renounced Christianity in the Convention (November 7th). Next the sections of Paris, one after another, ordered the churches within their jurisdiction to be closed; and on November 10th a half-naked ballet-dancer of ill-fame was publicly enthroned on the high altar of the cathedral of Notre Dame, as representative of the Goddess of Reason, whom alone France was in future to worship. Other similar Feasts of Reason followed in other churches, accompanied most of them with much riot, drunkenness, dancing, and plunder.

The closing of the churches and the Feasts of Reason were prompted partly by greed for the rich ecclesiastical vessels, ornaments, and vestments; partly by a genuine hatred for Catholicism and Christianity; partly by a mere

love of disorder and excess. Hébert probably had no better motive than a desire to curry favour with the mob, by whose help he hoped to attain supreme power. Chaumette seems to have been a sincere and fanatical atheist, with a real pity for the poor, and a real belief that they would somehow benefit by the abolition of Christianity.

The leading Jacobins in the Convention and the Committee had little sympathy with this movement. Such part as they took in it, they took under fear of the mob, or a desire to retain popularity. Robespierre, in particular, held that atheism was essentially aristocratic; and that the belief in a Supreme Being was the true basis of the feeling of fraternity and of Socialistic institutions. Danton was equally disgusted with the proceedings of the Atheists. He cared little about theology; but he was now desirous of ending the policy of Terrorism, which he had done so much to introduce, but which he considered had now secured its ends. Moreover, his desire for a strong executive made him dislike not only the disorders of the Anarchists, but also their policy of making the separate Communes almost independent. Though no longer on the Committee, Danton still upheld the principle of entrusting that body with almost despotic power.

Those of the Committee who did not object to the violence, disorder, and blasphemies of the Communists, yet regarded Hébert, Chaumette, and the rest as dangerous rivals. But they were divided against one another. Billaud-Varennés and Collot d'Herbois were almost equally disgusted with the growing lenity of Danton, and the sentimental, religious socialism of Robespierre. Thus the Jacobin leaders were divided into hostile groups, and the Anarchists, with the support of the Commune and a large

section of the mob, seemed for a time to be carrying everything before them.

Meanwhile the industrial confusion was increasing. The law, which fixed a *maximum* price for most sorts of commodities, rendered the tilling of much land unprofitable. So the State made the Communes responsible for the due carrying on of agricultural processes. This again involved the giving of additional powers to the local authorities. They were allowed to requisition men, horses, and materials. The National Debt was to a great extent repudiated. The sale of assignats was forbidden; and all prices not regulated by law, had trebled or quadrupled.

In social matters an equally revolutionary policy was pursued. The new Republican Calendar may be taken as a specimen of this. It was decided that the length of the months must be equalized, and their names rationalized. The new era was to be reckoned from the establishment of the Republic. Thus year 1 was to start from September 22nd, 1792. There were to be twelve months, each with three weeks. The week was to consist of ten days, to bring it into accord with the rational decimal system, and also as a protest against the Jewish and Christian "superstitions" connected with the seven days' week. The first month of the year (Sept. 22nd to Oct. 22nd) was to be called Vintage month (*Vendémiaire*). Then came Foggy month, Frosty month, Snowy month, Rainy month, Windy month, Buddy month, Flowery month, Meadowy month, Reaping month, Heat month, Fruity month, Vintage month. These twelve months provided for 360 days. The extra five were to be Republican festivals, standing outside the months, and dedicated to Genius, Labour, Deeds, Rewards, and Public Opinion! The new nomenclature of the months was

poetical as well as rational ; but the ten days' week, with its one day of rest, was certainly no improvement ; and it may fairly be questioned whether the old method of dedicating festivals to saintly persons was not preferable to the glorification of such questionable divinities as Rewards and Public Opinion. However, for good or evil, the new Calendar was adopted, and lasted in France for over twelve years.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FALL OF DANTON.

IN order to understand the confused, chaotic history of Paris in the early months of 1794, we must remind ourselves of the character and position of the four organizations which in greater or less degree controlled the course of events.

The Convention was in theory the supreme Legislative Body. Elected to give France a new Constitution, it had paid but little attention to this work ; and in the hour of the greatest national danger, it had suspended from the first the Constitution which it had drawn up. Its power was in a sense usurped, yet the Convention certainly had a better claim than any other body to speak in the name of France. Its decrees became the laws of the land. Its members could not be arrested without its consent. But it was distracted by fears and internal disputes. The party system had practically broken down. No one could say whom it would support ; for its policy depended largely on mob pressure ; and it had no means of securing its own independence.

If the Convention was the supreme Legislative Body of Revolutionary France, the Committee of Public Safety was

the supreme Executive. It was originally appointed on the 6th of April, 1793, at the critical time when the news of Dumouriez's defection had aroused all patriots to a sense of the country's danger. Its fundamental duty was, at first, to organize the national defence; while matters of internal administration were left to another Committee, the Committee of General Security. But, by a decree of October 10th, 1793, it became a sort of provisional despotism; and since then it had been the real government of France, so far as any legal government existed, though no doubt it was theoretically liable to be dissolved by the Convention. At the time we have now reached it consisted of eleven members, three of whom (Carnot, Prieur de la Marne, and Jean Bon St. André) were primarily administrators, and meddled little with domestic politics, or personal feuds. Carnot, in particular, seemed ready to sign anything put before him by his colleagues, and dealing with internal matters, so long as they did not interfere with his direction of the campaigns. It has been pointed out that Carnot signed far more death sentences than Robespierre himself. But this seems to be an evidence of indifference, and not of any thirst for blood. The stern soldier shrank from no responsibility, and signed death sentences in the intervals of his great work of organizing victories. Three of the other Committee-men (Robespierre, St. Just, and Couthon) were Socialists of the Rousseau school, bent on a definite reorganization of society. Another group of three (Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varennnes, and Lindet) were Terrorists of the worst sort, favourably inclined to the views of Hébert, contemptuous of Danton's wish for clemency, and of Robespierre's belief in God and immortality. Of the remaining two members of the Committee, Hérault de Séchelles was a Dantonist, while Barère

was uncertain, waiting, as at all critical moments, to see who was likely to prove the strongest ; but inclined on the whole to support the Terrorists, of whom Collot was now the most important.

But Collot was at this time (December 1793) absent from Paris, superintending the Lyons atrocities (see p. 107). Robespierre ventured therefore to attack the atheists. The Committee of *General Security*, which still existed, though in a more subordinate position, denounced those who were aiming "at the destruction of all faith in the immortality of the soul." Danton, who had recently married and retired from Paris, hurried back to support the attack against the Anarchists, and carried a resolution in the Convention directed against the so-called Feasts of Reason ; and a more important measure (Dec. 4th, 1793), which transferred many functions of the Commune to the two chief Committees, which thus became, legally, more despotic than ever.

This brings us back to the third organized body in Paris, the dreaded Commune, which had borne the chief part in the risings of August 10th, September 2nd, May 31st, and many others. Its legal jurisdiction was limited to Paris ; but its control of the armed force of the capital enabled it to dictate to the National Convention. Its leaders were the most extreme revolutionists, atheists, and anarchists.

The fourth body to which we have referred was the Jacobin Club. It differed from the rest in having absolutely no legal authority ; and yet in some respects it was the strongest of the four. Its power grew out of the fact that while the other three at best represented their constituents, the Club was the actual body of Paris revolutionists, on whom ultimately Convention, Committees, and Commune alike depended. The opinions and wishes of the masses

are at all times hard to discover, and those elected by universal suffrage only partially represent them. But in times of constant flux, when every day makes or mars reputations, and brings fresh ideas, suspicions, hopes to the front, the gulf between constituents and those they elect is widened ; and the Jacobin Club was powerful, partly because it consisted of samples rather than of representatives of the revolutionists, and these samples just the most energetic and excitable. Among them Robespierre was decidedly the favourite. Danton had as yet the most influence with the Convention ; and no one had succeeded in taking a decided lead in the Committee.

The feud between the revolutionary leaders was of a very complicated description. Hébert and Danton represent the two extreme views. Robespierre inclined to the latter. His friend and usual colleague, St. Just, considered both equally dangerous. He wished to uphold the Reign of Terror, and in this he seems to have been supported by the majority of the Committee. But here their agreement ended. On the question of whether the Communists were to be treated as friends or foes, there was a bitter difference.

In December 1793 the atrocities in the departments culminated with what are known as the Noyades of Carrier. Carrier was a renegade priest, who had been sent down by the Convention to superintend the restoration of peace in La Vendée. By his orders ninety priests were placed in a boat, which was then floated into the middle of the Loire and scuttled. Next a batch of 218 other priests were similarly drowned. Then men and women were tied together in pairs and flung into the river. The horror of the whole thing was aggravated by the spirit in which it was done. The drownings of priests were called Republican baptisms ;

those of the linked couples, Republican marriages, with other jests not fit to repeat.

These atrocities roused a reaction in Paris. A Dantonist, named Philippaux, who had been an eye-witness of some of the doings in La Vendée, energetically denounced them, both in the Convention and in the Jacobin Club. He was vigorously supported by Camille Desmoulins, in his paper, the *Old Cordelier*.¹ The brilliant wit and eloquence with which he had once defended Terrorism was now turned against the Terrorists. Robespierre and Danton were taking the same side (see page 117). The hopes of the humane rose high. A deputation of women appeared before the Convention to advocate a policy of mercy. A deputation came from Lyons to plead against the atrocities that were being perpetrated there. The Terrorists on the Committee became seriously alarmed. The *Old Cordelier* by no means confined its attacks to the Communists. St. Just himself, Robespierre's close friend, was held up to ridicule. Others of the Committee fared still worse. At this crisis Collot d'Herbois returned to Paris, from his work of vengeance at Lyons. He saw that there was not a moment to lose. In Committee, Convention, and Jacobin Club he laboured to turn back the stream that was setting in in favour of mercy. Of the Committee-men, Billaud and Lindet heartily concurred with him. Carnot, who was annoyed at Robespierre's interferences in some military matters, sided with the Terrorists.

Even St. Just and Couthon, Robespierre's usual supporters, threw their influence against the Dantonists. Barère, of

¹ The Cordelier Club was the most radical club of Paris in the early days of the Revolution. Desmoulins was attacking the new Radicals in the name of the principles which Radicals had once professed,

course, went with the majority ; and Robespierre soon found himself with only one supporter in the Committee. He hastened to extricate himself from this position. He was willing to continue the Reign of Terror, provided only the atheists and anarchists could be overthrown. St. Just, Couthon, and probably Carnot, shared his dislike of these men. Others of the Committee regarded them as dangerous rivals or had small love for them on other grounds ; so it was found possible to reunite the Committee on the basis that both the extreme parties should be sacrificed. Robespierre would abandon the Dantonists, if Collot would abandon the Hébertists, to the guillotine. St. Just took the chief part in bringing about this arrangement. He was the sort of fanatic who could not forgive being laughed at.

To strike at the leading Communists might prove, however, a dangerous matter. The Committee therefore paved their way by a bold bid for popularity. The Law of Suspects (Sept. 17th, 1793) already enabled the Government to imprison people on mere suspicion. It was now enacted that the property of all suspected persons so imprisoned should be confiscated for the good of the poor. Thousands of families were thus reduced to indigence ; and a bribe was offered to the poor far beyond anything that the Commune had the power of giving.

Hébert saw the ulterior object of this measure, and determined to appeal once more to the "sacred right of insurrection ;" but many of the Commune hesitated to co-operate, and (what was more important) Henriot, the commander of the National Guard, threw in his lot with Robespierre. Thus the proposed insurrection came to nothing. Then the Committee struck their blow. St. Just, in their name, denounced two factions to the Convention.

One he called "the spurious imitators of Marat;" the other, "the cruel philanthropists;" and though at first he named no names, every one knew that he was referring to the Hébertists and the Dantonists. The Convention gave no sign of dissent, so the Committee boldly ordered the arrest of Hébert and nineteen of his partizans (March 13th); and proceeded to impeach five of Danton's chief friends before the Convention (March 16th and 17th). The arrested Hébertists were hurried to the Revolutionary Tribunal and condemned to death. It was a fit ending for the editor of *Père Duchesne* that he was one of the few victims of the guillotine who did not die bravely. He fainted several times, and wept copiously on his way to execution.

Danton's turn followed soon. Five of his friends had already been impeached. Four more (including Desmoulins and Philippaux) were arrested on March 30th, and Danton was warned that he would be the next. "They will not dare," he said; but he had himself taught men to dare much. The news of his arrest created an immense sensation. People had been growing weary of political trials; but now they thronged to the Revolutionary Tribunal to see and hear the great democrat. They filled the hall, and climbed up outside to peer in through the windows. Danton's resonant voice is said to have been clearly heard right across the Seine. His defence was cut short by order of the Convention, with whom he had once been all-powerful; and the founder of Terrorism trod the path along which he had sent many, to be followed in due course by those who condemned him. "O my wife, my beloved, I shall never see thee more," he said at the scaffold; then, pulling himself up, "Danton—no weakness." His last words were a request to the executioner to show his head to the people.

Danton was, next to Mirabeau, the greatest of the Revolutionists. Unlike most of them, he united the instincts of a statesman with the manners of a demagogue. There was something of genius in his grasp of facts, in his insight, and in his power of inspiring others with his own enthusiasm, self-confidence, and audacity. More than any other man he represents the French Revolution, with its strange mixture of the heroic and the brutal. There was a certain largeness about his nature, which expressed itself sometimes in gigantic crimes and sometimes in noble thoughts. It was in all honesty that he declared his willingness that his own name should be accursed, so that France should be saved ; and again, when he asserted that he would rather be guillotined than a guillotiner, after Terrorism had done its work. Yet he was a barbarian, greedy of gain and of sensual indulgence, flinging himself with the same energy into low debauchery, or into working out the salvation of France. He was only thirty-five at the time of his death ; but he was broken down by the efforts of the previous years, and only showed intermittent energy in his later months. But for this he might not have been so easily overthrown.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROBESPIERRE'S ASCENDENCY.

THE fall of Hébert and Danton left Robespierre supreme in France. The Convention, the Commune, the Committee of Public Safety, and the Jacobin Club all professed the greatest devotion to him ; and for some months he held a position such as no one ever held during the Revolutionary period. We may well ask how it came to pass that an obscure provincial lawyer, of mediocre abilities and repulsive appearance, was able to triumph over all difficulties and all rivals, and attain to a practical dictatorship in what claimed to be a democratic Republic.

The fundamental explanation of his rise seems to lie in the fact that Robespierre represented more than any other of the Revolutionary leaders the *social* ideals which, in combination with such objective facts as Hunger, Oppression, German invaders, etc., brought about the Revolution. Marat and Danton had more genuine sympathy for the poor, if the latter be viewed not as an abstract entity, but as a collection of suffering individuals. But they had no coherent social faith ; no sense even that such a faith was needful. Their speeches and writings dealt with the immediate present ; while Robespierre was ever reminding men,

especially in the Jacobin Club, of a reorganization of society that must be carried through before any of their ideals could be realized. He looked to education and a national religion as the great forces by which France must be regenerated ; and he tried every question that arose by the standard of the principles which he had learnt from Jean Jacques. This devotion to abstract principles was perhaps Robespierre's most characteristic feature. "Let the colonies perish rather than a principle," he said, when he was defence-ing giving votes to black men ; and if his principles became mere formulæ, they were at least the formulæ most calculated to attract the thoughtful and warm-hearted among the classes suffering from poverty. He was a fanatic, but he had at least the virtues of fanaticism—an untiring zeal, a consistency underlying apparent changes of opinion, a capacity for self-denial, a contempt for wealth and pleasure.

This brings us to the second of the causes of Robespierre's rise to power. His character contrasted favourably with those of the other Jacobin leaders, in just those points which the mob would most appreciate. Marat, indeed, shares with Robespierre the glory of having lived in honourable poverty when it would have been easy for him to grow rich. But Marat indulged in sexual immorality. Mirabeau and Danton not only erred in this respect ; they also accepted what were intended as bribes, even if they did not actually sell their principles. Hébert openly appealed to what was lowest in human nature. Robespierre, on the other hand, always made his appeal to noble sentiments, and so far lived up to them that he was known as "The Incorruptible," and that his private life was simple and austere. And he had his reward. In an age when suspicions were more than usually apt to attach themselves to all prominent

persons, the masses never suspected Robespierre. They might not love him; but they felt sure he could be trusted.

We have called his abilities mediocre. "Nature," says Nodier, "seems to have intended him for anything rather than success as an orator. Imagine a little man with a feeble frame, sharpened physiognomy, and brow compressed on both sides like that of a beast of prey; his lips long, pale, immobile; his voice hoarse in the lower, discordant in the higher notes, and which, in the exultation of rage, turned into a sort of howl like that of a hyæna." Yet he conquered all difficulties by industry and sincerity. He would rise in the dead of night, and write and re-write what he had to say, accumulating commonplaces, working out arguments till his speeches became elaborate treatises, exasperating for their length, but yet masterpieces of logical arrangement. Carlyle is amazed that fifteen hundred people, not bound to it, would sit, night after night, at the Jacobin Club to listen to these orations. But after all Robespierre was putting into logical form what these fifteen hundred felt and believed. When the masses had to choose between their two favourite orators, their heart was for Danton, but their head was for Robespierre.

His responsibility for the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror has often been exaggerated. It is certain that he signed comparatively few of the sentences, and that the number of executions actually increased after his fall;¹ and that his letters to his brother show a real desire to put an end

¹ The numbers of executions during the worst six months were; February, 75; March, 123; April, 263; May, 304; June, 672; July, 835. Robespierre was executed in July, and had taken no part in the doings of the Committee for some weeks before his fall.

to Terrorism. Nevertheless, it is impossible to exonerate him from the charge of caring little how many victims fell, if they were people who stood in the way of his plans. With all his sentimentalism, he was heartless towards individuals. Yet he was beloved by the family in whose house he lodged. He was engaged to be married to one of the daughters. Another of them, who survived him for fifty years, could never understand the abuse lavished on one who had seemed to her gentle, virtuous, and pure. A dog loved him too. But he had few other friends.

After Danton's fall, Robespierre was able to reorganize the whole administrative system, transferring most of the actual work of Government to twelve Committees, which were each to deal with one department, as Justice, Finance, Commerce, etc. The lists of members for these Committees were drawn up by Robespierre himself, submitted to the Convention, and accepted without amendment. The Paris Commune was also transformed, by the substitution of Robespierre's nominees for those whose loyalty to him was doubtful. The Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris was subservient to him, so those in the provinces were abolished, and their functions were transferred to the capital. On the same principle, the Paris clubs were all closed except the Jacobin.

These sweeping measures typify the way in which Robespierre tried to stamp out individuality and originality. His friend, St. Just, wished the Government to lay hold of every Frenchman almost from infancy and educate him after a particular model. Boys were to be taken from their parents at the age of seven and brought up by the State. The State was to be a universal censor of morals, repressing men's passions, and purifying their desires—by force! There

is something marvellous in Robespierre's childish confidence in the power of Government. In an elaborate report which he drew up before he obtained supreme power, he says that hitherto the Revolution has been led "by love of the right, and a sense of the country's needs, rather than by any exact theory or precise rules." But now, "we desire a state of things wherein all base and cruel passions shall be enchained, all generous and beneficent feelings awakened *by the laws*." And again: "The Government of a Revolution is the *despotism* of liberty against tyranny" (February 4th, 1794).

His socialistic policy involved wholesale confiscations of property. In his earlier speeches at the Jacobin Club he laid down the sound¹ principle that those whose income did not suffice for decent subsistence should be exempt from all taxation; and that the wealthier classes should be taxed progressively, the richer paying an amount more than proportional to their income. But he carried this principle to an extravagant length. His accession to supreme authority in the Committee was followed, as we have seen, by the confiscation of the property of suspects. And now he pushed forwards confiscation, even where there was no pretence of political treachery. Rousseau had taught that digging the earth and other agricultural pursuits were conducive to virtue; so the Government now began to try to divert the national industry into tilling the earth. Pleasure grounds were converted into potato fields, or otherwise utilized for productive purposes; while trade and manufactures were actually denounced. Thus Robespierre's friend, St. Just, wrote: "Il ne peut exister de peuple vertueux et libre, qu'un peuple agriculture. Un métier s'accorde mal avec le véritable citoyen." He proposed to cut up France into small

¹ *I.e.* in the opinion of the author of the book.

estates, and to encourage simple tastes by forbidding any one to eat meat on more than one of the ten days of each Republican week.

Robespierre did not live long enough to try to realize this hopeful programme. He managed, however, to get his National Religion established after a fashion. The Convention decreed the existence of a Supreme Being, and instituted thirty-six annual festivals in His honour. The new religion was inaugurated on June 8th by an inaugural address from Robespierre, and a scene intended to be impressive. Hideous pasteboard figures, representing atheism, crime, etc., had been dipped in turpentine so that they might easily be set on fire. From their ashes an image of Wisdom was to emerge by machinery. On this great occasion Robespierre's sea-green complexion was set off by a sky-blue coat. The programme had carefully specified when people were to weep for joy. We are not told if they carried out their parts properly; but it appears that Wisdom got smoked in the course of its emergence.

For Robespierre it was a great day, but he does not seem to have been much elated. He was already feeling himself unequal to the task laid upon him. He said himself on one occasion: "I was not made to rule, I was made to combat the enemies of the Revolution;" and so the possession of supreme power produced in him no feeling of exultation. On the contrary, it preyed upon his spirits, and made him fancy himself the object of universal hatred. A guard now slept nightly at his house, and followed him in all his walks. Two pistols lay ever at his side. He would not eat food till some one else had tasted from the dish. His jealous fears were awakened by every sign of popularity in another. Even the successes of his generals

filled him with anxiety, lest they should raise up dangerous rivals.

He had, indeed, some grounds enough for anxiety. In the Committee of Public Safety every member, except St. Just and Couthon, viewed him with hatred and suspicion. Carnot resented his interferences. The Terrorists were contemptuous of his religious festivals, and disliked his decided supremacy. The friends of Mercy saw with indignation that the number of victims was increasing. The friends of Disorder found themselves restrained, and were bored by his long speeches about virtue and simplicity of life. He was hated for what was good and for what was evil in his government; and meanwhile the national distress was growing, and the cry of starvation was heard louder than ever. Fortunately there was a splendid harvest in 1794; but before it was gathered in Robespierre had fallen.

A somewhat frivolous incident did much to discredit him. A certain old woman, named Catherine Théot, living in an obscure part of Paris, had taken to seeing visions. Some of the Terrorists produced a paper, purporting to be written by her, and declaring that Robespierre was the Messiah. The paper was a forgery, but it served to cover Robespierre with ridicule, and to rouse in him a fierce determination to suppress those whom he considered his enemies in the Committee and the Convention. For some time he had taken little part in the proceedings of either of these bodies. His reliance was chiefly on the Jacobin Club, the re-organized Commune, and the National Guards, still under the command of Henriot. But, on July 26th, Robespierre came to the Convention and delivered one of his most elaborate speeches, maintaining that the affairs of France had been mismanaged; that the army had been allowed to

become dangerously independent ; that the Government must be strengthened and simplified ; and that traitors must be punished. He made no definite proposals, and did not name his intended victims. The real meaning of the speech was evidently that he ought to be made Dictator, but that in order to obtain his end, it was necessary to conceal the use he meant to make of his power. The members of the Convention naturally felt that some of themselves were aimed at.

Few felt themselves safe ; but Robespierre's dominance had become so established that no one ventured at first to criticize. It was proposed, and carried unanimously, that the speech should be printed and circulated throughout France. Then at length a deputy named Cambon rose to answer Robespierre's attacks on the recent management of the finances. Finding himself favourably listened to, he went on to attack Robespierre himself. Other members of the hitherto docile Convention now took courage ; and it was decided that the speech should be referred to the Committees before it was printed.

The crisis was now at hand. Robespierre went down as usual to the Jacobin Club, where he was received with the usual enthusiasm. The members swore to die with their leader, or to suppress his enemies. On the following day St. Just attacked Billaud and Collot. Billaud replied by asserting that on the previous night the Jacobins had pledged themselves to massacre the deputies. Then the storm burst. A cry of horror and indignation arose ; and as Billaud proceeded to give details of the alleged conspiracy, shouts of "Down with the tyrant !" began to rise from the benches. Robespierre vainly strove to obtain a hearing. He rushed about the chamber, appealing to the several groups. As he

went up to the higher benches on the Left; he was met with the cry, "Back, tyrant, the shade of Danton repels you!" and when he sought shelter among the deputies on the Right, and actually sat down in their midst, they indignantly exclaimed, "Wretch, that was Vergniaud's seat!" Baited on all sides, his attempts to speak became shrieks, which were scarcely audible, however, amid the shouts and interruptions that rose from all the groups. His voice grew hoarser and hoarser, till at length it failed him altogether. Then one of the Mountain cried, "The blood of Danton chokes him!" Amid a scene of indescribable excitement and uproar, a decree was passed that Robespierre and some of his leading followers should be arrested. They were seized by the officers of the Convention, and hurried off to different prisons; so that, in case of a rescue, only one of them might be released.

There was room enough for fear. The Commune organized an insurrection, as soon as they heard what the Convention had done; and by a sudden attack the prisoners were all delivered from the hands of their guards. Both parties now hastily gathered armed forces. Those of the municipality were by far the more numerous, and Henriot confidently ordered them to advance. But the men refused to obey. The Sections mostly declared for the Convention, and thus by an unexpected reaction the Robespierian leaders found themselves almost deserted.

A detachment of soldiers forced their way into the room where the small band of fanatics were drawing up a Proclamation. A pistol was fired; and no one knows with certainty whether Robespierre attempted suicide, or was shot by one of his opponents. At any rate his jaw was fractured, and he was laid out, a ghastly spectacle, on an adjacent table.

The room was soon crowded. Some spat at the prostrate form. Others stabbed him with their knives. Soon he was dragged before the Tribunal which he himself had instituted. The necessary formalities were hurried through, and the mangled body was borne to the guillotine, where what remained to him of life was quickly extinguished. Then, from the crowd, a man stepped quickly up to the blood-stained corpse, and uttered over him the words, "Yes, Robespierre, there is a God."

History does not record any more startling fall than that of Robespierre. It is difficult to trace the steps by which the popular idol became, within a few months, the object of almost universal execration. The masses, to whom he had promised a regeneration of society on socialistic principles, were disgusted to find that their misery was only aggravated during his ascendancy. The Moderates had hoped to see him diminish Terrorism; but they found that the number of victims was steadily increasing. The disorderly classes resented the restraints he wished to impose in the name of virtue and religion. His colleagues found themselves almost superseded, and felt that their very lives were in danger if they incurred his jealous suspicions. Accordingly, they took the lead in conspiring against him, and carried through what is known as the Revolution of Thermidor. The one object of that movement was to overthrow Robespierre. Those who took part in it had no other common aims; and no one could guess what the next step would be.

A few words may be here introduced as to the general character and extent of the Reign of Terror, and of the other atrocities perpetrated by the Revolutionists. A distinction must plainly be made between three kinds of outrages. In

the first place, there were those committed by angry and excited mobs, in moments of panic, suspicion, or fury, when the bonds of authority were broken. Of these there is little to say, but that wherever the masses are brutalized by oppression, ignorance, and hunger, such things must be expected, from time to time. Certainly, in this respect, the outrages of the Revolutionary Period were not worse than those of the *Jacquerie* in the 14th century, or of the Peasant Revolts in Germany in the time of Luther. It is through this kind of thing that the sternest lesson is given of the consequences of misgovernment and neglect. In these terrible ways men are made to feel that the condition of the poor is a matter of universal concern, which governments and individuals can only neglect at their peril. If men and women are not able to live healthy, human lives, many of them will be brutalized ; and will turn and rend people who are not really responsible for the existing evils. The second class of atrocities took the form of excessive and cruel punishments, inflicted on those who had actually fought against the Revolution, or taken an active part in some of the reactionary conspiracies. Of this class are the *fusillades* at Lyons and the *noyades* at Nantes. These, again, it is only too easy to match from history, by the atrocities, for instance, with which the above-mentioned peasant risings were punished ; or if a more recent parallel be demanded, we may set the treatment of the defeated Paris Communists in 1871 against the *fusillades* of 1793. Horrible as such things were, they were certainly not peculiar to the French Revolution.

The third class of atrocities comprises the more cold-blooded and judicial murders of people who had engaged in no open and armed rebellion against the Republic. In these the act was the deliberate act of a Tribunal set up

directly by the Government. Of these judicial murders, the horror is aggravated by the callousness of the perpetrators and of the majority of the Paris people. The executions came to be regarded by many, not as necessary evils, but as spectacles to be enjoyed and subjects for never failing-jests. The guillotine came to be spoken of familiarly as a female friend. "She" was canonized; and models of St. Guillotine were worn on women's necks in place of the discarded Cross. A few fanatics really believed in the regenerating influence of St. Guillotine; but to most of the admirers of this strange saint, it was merely a jest that hundreds of people were being put to death on the flimsiest evidence.

We do well to speak with horror of the Reign of Terror, and of the Revolutionary Tribunal which sent about 3000 persons to death. Yet even here we may remind ourselves that this terribly large number shrinks into insignificance when compared with the innocent persons hurried to a more painful death in needless wars, by the ambition of rulers whom the world delights to honour. Let us clear our minds of cant and neither extenuate nor exaggerate the horrors; and take what comfort we can from the knowledge that the chief actors honestly believed they were promoting the good of France and of Humanity; that the victims almost all met their death with courage and dignity; that the dim millions of Frenchmen gained greatly by the Revolution as a whole, and suffered little from the Reign of Terror.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REACTION.

THE fall of Robespierre was followed by a sharp but brief struggle between those who wished to prolong and even intensify the Reign of Terror, and those who were anxious to bring it to a close. The leaders of the Thermidor Revolution belonged to the former class. Foremost among them were Collot, Billaud, and Barère. The victims of the guillotine were for a few days more numerous than ever. But the Committee soon found itself threatened by a determined reaction against the whole policy of Terror. That policy had always rested largely on the support of the Commune and of the Jacobin Club. Now the leaders of the Commune had almost all fallen, with Hébert or with Robespierre; and the spirit of the Jacobin Club was to some extent broken by the failure of the moral and social ideas which Robespierre had represented, as well as by Robespierre's own fall. The Convention soon showed a determination to assert itself as the real legal authority in France. It would no longer let itself be dominated by its own Committees. These were reorganized; their powers were curtailed; and it was decided that one-fourth of each Committee should retire every month.

No doubt in the Convention there were the widest differences of opinion. But the majority were opposed to the Terror, and still more to the dominance of the Paris mob. Old members of the Plain, old followers of the Gironde, old Dantonists were agreed in this. Seventy-three deputies, who had been imprisoned for protesting against the expulsion of the Girondists, were liberated, and allowed to take their seats in the Convention. This greatly strengthened the Moderate party. They abolished the law of *maximum* and the system under which the poorer citizens were paid for discharging their political duties. At every step in the Reaction a chorus of approval rose from most parts of France. The old upper classes and the well-to-do generally exerted themselves vigorously. Their young men (the *jeunesse dorée*) organized themselves into an armed force to maintain order in the streets. The Jacobin Club was abolished. The decrees against nobles and priests were rescinded, and at length, in the January of 1795, the churches were reopened for Catholic worship.

In the provinces, the Reaction was even more violent. There were murders and atrocities of various kinds committed against the lately dominant Jacobins, and there was misery indescribable. The desperate measures which the Revolutionary Government had adopted to feed the poor, and to keep down prices, had mostly been discontinued, and there was now a fearful reaction. The paper-money of the Republic had become almost valueless, and prices had risen to an almost incredible pitch. Many actually died of starvation. Yet the Reactionists were celebrating their triumph with a great outburst of luxury and dissipation. In the general distress some had made money. By buying up confiscated lands; by clever gambling on the Stock

Exchange, by making good bargains with the Government for supplying the armies with provisions and clothing and other things needful, fortunes had been acquired. During the Reign of Terror no one durst give signs of wealth, lest they should thereby excite suspicion or cupidity. But now the fear has passed away; and those who have money to spend are trying to make up for lost time. There are balls and festivities; extravagant fashions; imitations of ancient attire; and many other manifestations of luxury and frivolity. This naturally embitters the starving democracy; and two, if not three, great risings take place against the Reaction.

The first was in March 1795, or, as they still called it, Germinal in the year three. Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère, Thermidorians though they had been, were impeached before the Convention. The mob rose in their defence to the cry of "Bread, Constitution of '93, Liberation of the Patriots." As in the old days, a half-armed crowd marched against the Convention. But they had now little organization; so they were easily driven back, and the impeached "patriots" were sentenced to transportation. More serious was the rising of May 21st (1st Prairial). The cry and the tactics were the same as in Germinal; but the preparations had been more careful, and the attack was more vigorous. The mob burst into the Chamber. The frightened majority fled in confusion. The Radical minority declared itself the Convention, and rapidly passed decree after decree. But meanwhile the Gilded Youths were preparing to meet force by force. After a sharp conflict they drove out the rioters and captured most of the Rump Convention. The next day the Sansculottes advanced again to the attack. But fair promises and an imposing military array sufficed to scatter them; and the Convention

speedily ordered and succeeded in carrying through the disarming of the poorer quarters of Paris.

Meanwhile they had drawn up yet another Constitution for France, based to a great extent on the old Constitution of 1791, with a limited suffrage and property qualification for voting; but with two Chambers and no Sovereign. The supreme executive power was to be held by five directors. Two-thirds of the present Convention was to sit, without election, in the new Legislature. This disgusted the Royalists, who had hoped that the elections would give them a majority. So they, in their turn, tried a riot—the Insurrection of Vendemiaire, as it is called. The Royalists were now pretty numerous, and there were plenty of disorderly spirits in the capital ready to attack the Convention, even under the white flag. But again the established government triumphed. Buonaparte was employed to organize the troops against the strange alliance of Royalists and Sansculottes. This he did efficiently and victoriously; and the new Constitution, with its five directors, came duly into force in the October of 1795.

We must now briefly describe the proceedings of the War since the end of 1793.

The fundamental facts were still the divisions among the Allies, the incapacity of their generals, and the contrasted energy and enthusiasm of the French. Carnot still directed the campaigns. He made many blunders, but these often resulted in victories owing to the folly or supineness of his opponents; and when the French suffered reverses they soon repaired them by their vigour and zeal. In 1794 a Spanish invasion was rolled back; Savoy was reconquered; and above all the victories of Turcoign (April 18th) and Fleurus (June 26th) were followed by the surrender of

Brussels and the conquest of Belgium. The English and Dutch retired to Holland, which was invaded in the following winter. Only on the sea, and in distant parts of the world, the English did something to balance the general disasters of the Coalition. In the Mediterranean, Nelson was already rising into prominence; while on June 1st, 1794, Lord Howe gained, in the neighbourhood of Brest, the most considerable naval battle that had yet been fought during the War. The English successes had however little effect on the general progress of the conflict. In fact they rather disposed Spain and Holland to withdraw from the Coalition. For these two powers had important colonies, and great naval traditions. They were by no means pleased to see the naval supremacy of Great Britain becoming more and more unquestioned. Prussia had already practically retired from the war; and in the early part of 1795 definite treaties of peace were made by France with her and Spain and Holland, as well as with several minor German and Italian governments. Practically there remained only England and Austria to carry on the struggle; and even the latter was only persuaded to continue the war by gigantic British subsidies.

The chief military event of 1795 was an attempt of the English to effect a landing in Brittany, where the Catholic peasantry were keeping up an irregular resistance to the Republican authorities. An army of French emigrants were landed by an English fleet on the peninsula of Quiberon. But the expedition was badly managed; and the Breton peasants were distracted by the conflicting claims of patriotism and religion. The Reactionary party had now triumphed at Paris. The new government guaranteed religious freedom and offered liberal terms to the Royalist insurgents. Many

of them accepted these terms. The rest were easily defeated, and the English fleet retired carrying off as many fugitives as managed to escape to them.

The Republic had now triumphed over all its enemies. France had been successfully defended against a European Coalition. The war became from this time a War of Aggression on the part of France. Her people, intoxicated by their brilliant successes, gave themselves over to dreams of conquest, and were ready to surrender their liberties to the great soldier whose biography becomes, for the next twenty years, the history of France. The Reaction from the Reign of Terror naturally co-operated with the desire for military glory, to reconcile France to a despotic government, especially since Buonaparte showed an administration and legislative ability scarcely less than his genius for war; and resolutely upheld some at least of the Revolutionary principles.

The Revolutionary movement was now, in a sense, concluded, though in another and a deeper sense it was to remain, and still remains, one of the most important factors in European history.

CHAPTER XV.

LESSONS OF THE REVOLUTION.

WE may fitly close our brief survey of the French Revolution by a few remarks on the lessons in Political Science which this extraordinary movement teaches. And first we will notice the evidence which it affords of the Power of Ideas. We have seen to what an extent the Gospel of Jean Jacques Rousseau affected the course of the national progress. Convictions of the Dignity of Man, of the Claims of Nature, of the Perfectibility of Institutions, and of the Rights of the Poor gave an element of loftiness to much that without them would have been merely brutal. It was because the old Monarchy, the old Nobility and the old Church, with all the privileges of the rich and the high-born, were undermined by the eighteenth century ideas, that they fell so promptly and with so terrible a crash. And after every apparent failure, and in every successive crisis, the Revolution baptized itself again in the spiritual waters from which it gained its first strength, and then marched forwards again on its path of triumph. The Victories over the foreign invaders teach the same lesson. After all that can be said about the divisions among the Allies, the want of energy in the Governments, and the incapacity of the Generals, the

fact remains that France triumphed mainly because her people were animated by sentiments which in the long run produced the necessary organization and discipline and energy, as well as the necessary enthusiasm. An armed nation upheld by ideals drove back the armies of states in whom national self-consciousness was comparatively weak, and who represented no such living principles.

2. Second among the lessons taught by the History of the French Revolution, we may put that lesson which Carlyle has insisted upon with so much vigour, and which it needs all his skill to present in a form which shall not seem to make of it a mere commonplace. To say that shams cannot last for ever, may appear somewhat futile. Yet it has to be said. In the beginning of the eighteenth century the French Monarchy seemed to be, and in some respects was, the most powerful in the world. It needed the genius of Marlborough, backed by a Grand Alliance of European Powers, to check the aggressions of Louis XIV. But this powerful French Monarchy had sucked the strength out of the other national institutions. It had reduced the nobles to mere courtiers, and the Church to an organized hypocrisy. It rested chiefly on brute force, and was draining the material wealth of the nation to maintain a formidable army. It patronized intellect, but only on condition that intellect would be its obedient servant, and would divorce itself from national politics. The Church was similarly demoralized by patronage conditional on subserviency. The King was to be the State. The nobles, clergy and commons were to be deprived of all initiative and all independence. The resulting despotism was at first the stronger for the absence of rival forces. But the whole arrangement was rotten, and the rottenness showed itself very unmistakably in the financial

troubles which hurried on the Revolution. The King's government, which was to do everything, found that it could not even pay its way. Neither could it maintain order, and it had reduced the Institutions, which might otherwise have aided it, into mere Superstitions, mere survivals of Forms from which the Spirit had vanished. Accordingly the whole Social and Political Constitution of France fell almost without a struggle.

Then began to be taught what we may regard as the third great lesson of the French Revolution. It is often easy to destroy Institutions. It is still easier to create new ones. But the difficulty is to make these new ones work. Almost every one saw what France needed. A government that should be strong without being despotic ; social equality and justice ; diminution of poverty ; and an elevation of the national character to the level of the national ideals. But not one of these things could be secured by Declarations of Rights, or Declarations of Duties ; by Paper Constitutions or suspensions of Constitutions ; by Regulating Prices or by Redistributing Property. It was easy, for instance, to draw up a system of election, to give manhood suffrage, or a franchise limited to the active citizens. But you could not ensure that your voters should vote, still less that they should vote wisely, or that the elected Legislature should be able to enforce its own decrees. It was found necessary in moments of danger to suspend constitutions and establish new despotisms in order to prevent France from falling to pieces, or becoming a prey to foes. Equality before the Law was found to be equally easy to proclaim and difficult to secure. The Revolutionary Tribunals became infamous instruments of injustice and oppression. With juries and without juries, verdicts were equally scandalous. The

Church was proscribed by men honestly believing in religious liberty. To be suspected of royalism was accounted a crime. So too with the economic difficulties. Socialist writers have indeed maintained that the Law of Maximum and the other Socialistic measures of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention did do something towards ameliorating the lot of the poor. They give good reasons for their belief that the condition of the masses was somewhat better during the Revolutionary period than under the old régime; and that wages were somewhat increased, and prices to some extent kept down by Socialistic laws. This is true in a sense. But the slight improvement in the condition of the poor was chiefly brought about by wholesale confiscations, which could not in the nature of things be repeated for long. France was actually poorer in 1794 than in 1789. The fact that her wealth was more equally distributed was in itself satisfactory. But what was to be done in the coming years, when there would be no more wealth of clergy, emigrants and suspects to confiscate for the benefit of the poor? The frightful distress in the winter of 1794-5 might be attributed immediately not to the Socialism of the Jacobins, but to the Reaction of Thermidor, to the abolition of Maximum Laws and other Socialistic measures. But the distress was ultimately due to the exodus of capital, and the paralysis of industry which were brought about by the Revolutionary disorders, and aggravated by the Socialistic legislation, and the disorganization of the currency. This would not be the place to discuss the feasibility or the expediency of a Socialistic organization of society; but at least we may learn from the history of the French Revolution to distrust rapid and sweeping changes, and to expect permanent progress only

in connection with the gradual evolution of industrial arrangements and with a corresponding improvement in the national character. This improvement can scarcely be other than slow. There is something at once beautiful and tragic and ridiculous in the expectations that were indulged in by many of the revolutionists of a speedy regeneration of humanity by a few fine phrases and a few sweeping laws (accompanied by a due number of guillotinings). We have become sadder and let us hope wiser, through their experiences. We smile at the strange alternative which they presented to their victims, of "Love me or die"; but we may still cherish their ideals, though we have to reconcile ourselves to moving more slowly towards them.

The Revolution failed to establish Liberty. But in this failure it certainly does not stand alone. No form of Government or of society has succeeded in the attempt to combine full freedom with law and order and due protection of the weak. Civilization implies restraint, and perhaps the restraints must go on increasing as civilization becomes more complex. Otherwise private rights may become public wrongs, and the liberty of the poorer and weaker sections of society may become a mere fiction; since these classes may find themselves under an economic pressure to sacrifice real freedom and self-development. Socialism, at any rate, implies a rigorous restraint on individual liberty. It even involves a serious danger of checking originality and stamping out variety. It may be possible to avoid this danger, but certainly it was not avoided in the days when the old worship was forbidden, and every sign of wealth or good breeding was counted a crime. The Reaction of Thermidor was at least partly a reaction in favour of liberty. The Socialists call it, truly

enough, a triumph of the middle classes, and connect it, rightly, with the subsequent advance of France in the direction of Competitive Commercialism. But this implies that the Reaction involved a removing of shackles, and illustrates how far the Revolution had diverged from its watchword of Liberty.

And again, the Revolution did not establish Equality. But in this direction it probably did more than any other single movement in all history has done. There is probably more social equality in France at the present day than in any other great European country. The hereditary principle counts for less; careers are more open to talent; there is more association of different classes in public schools; and more equality in social intercourse. But these facts give no adequate idea of how much the French Revolution has done for Equality. For its principles have, in this respect, spread beyond France. In every part of Europe they have co-operated with other forces to destroy or diminish whatsoever of the feudal spirit had survived the decay of feudal institutions.

Of the contributions of the French Revolution to the cause of Fraternity, it is more difficult to speak decisively. The belief that all men are brothers is implied in Christianity, and in all religions based on the Fatherhood of God. It has long been, in theory, part of the accepted ethical system. In practice, of course, it has been constantly ignored. But the records of the Revolution contain as flagrant practical denials of human Fraternity as do those of Monarchies, Aristocracies and Churches. The cry for Fraternity ended in the Guillotine, the Fusillades, the Noyades. Yet this cry was in a real sense the most sincere and characteristic watchword of the Revolutionists. Those

who will, may indulge in easy sneers at the contrast between the professions and the acts of individuals like Marat and Robespierre, or of masses like the Paris mobs. But men must be judged, not so much by what they do, as by what they aim at ; and this last is not discoverable by any process of sneering. We cannot prove that there was any sincerity in those who stained their hands in blood while they were professing the loftiest sentiments. But I am satisfied that an honest study of the facts will justify the belief that a genuinely increased sense of human brotherhood was a real and important factor in the history of the Revolution. Let us then frankly acknowledge this. But let us not therefore shut our eyes to the fact that the Revolutionists violated the most elementary moral laws, and especially the law that men should love one another as brethren.

Thus the Revolution failed to establish either Liberty, or Equality, or Fraternity. It failed to give France a permanent Constitution. The Republic itself soon ceased to exist. But we must not, therefore, suppose that the Revolution was itself a failure. It did not achieve the impossible, nor even the best possible. But it did achieve results of a most beneficial sort, which none of the subsequent political changes and disasters undergone by France have been able to undo. She soon bartered her freedom for military glory. She put herself under an Emperor, and pursued an aggressive policy which raised fresh Coalitions against her. She endured crushing defeats, and the victorious Allies compelled her to recall her ancient line of kings. Her national tricolour was replaced by the white flag of the Bourbons, but the old régime was not restored. Kings and nobles came back, but not feudalism or the old privileges. The peasant proprietors remained proprietors

indeed, with their land relieved from the old burdens which had made proprietorship a fiction. The barriers between provinces, the religious persecutions, the judicial anomalies and barbarities, the hereditary posts, the most oppressive taxes, had all been swept away for ever. The Napoleonic Code, itself the offspring of the Revolution, remained the basis of French law ; and of the liberties that were lost under the Empire in 1815 many were recovered in the succeeding years ; till in 1848 France became again a Republic, and again did the world the service of trying socialistic experiments, unsuccessful for a time, but not destitute of instruction. The second Republic was even more short-lived than the first ; but amid the disasters of 1870 France once more established a Republican Government, which has now lasted for more than twenty years, and has never seemed stronger than it does at the present.

Of the old institutions of France only one survived the Revolutionary deluge. At the time, the Church was perhaps the most unpopular of all, and not one of the others was attacked with more ferocity. Her shrines were insulted, her worship was prohibited, her clergy were put to death for no other crime than that they were priests. But in the long run it proved that she was the only one of the old institutions which had sufficient vitality to survive the storm. The Revolution could neither silence nor answer the deeper questionings of the human soul ; and a fair proportion of the French nation came back to, or never deserted, the Faith of their Fathers. The hostility between the Revolution and Catholicism has lasted down to our times in spite of many able efforts at reconciling the two sets of ideas and principles. There are now signs however that the hostility is becoming less bitter. Clericals are

accepting the Republic, and Republicans are pleading for justice towards clericals. It may therefore be hoped that one of the worst wounds that France received during the Revolutionary period is beginning to heal ; and one of the greatest dangers to the third Republic is passing away.

SUMMARY OF DATES, &c.

PROLOGUE.

Rousseau's <i>Essay on Inequality</i>	1753
Rousseau's <i>Social Contract</i>	1762
Accession of Louis XVI.	1774
Turgot, Minister of Finance	1774—1776
Necker's Budget published	1781
Convocation of Notables	1787
Brienne's dispute with Parliament of Paris ...	1788
Necker restored to Ministry of Finance	1788

THE REVOLUTION (1789—1795).

A.—THE NATIONAL (OR CONSTITUENT) ASSEMBLY (1789—1791).

First Period (the Destruction of the Old Régime).

1789.

The States-General meet at Versailles	May 5
The Commons adopt Passive Attitude	May 6
They declare themselves the National Assembly	June 17
Mirabeau defies Government at Royal Sessions	June 23
Dismissal of Necker, Formation of Reactionary Ministry	July 11

Fall of the Bastile	...	...	...	...	July 14
Abolition of Privileges of Nobles and Clergy					Aug. 4
Versailles Banquets. Rising of Paris Women					Oct. 1—5
King and Assembly brought to Paris	...	...			Oct. 6
Church Wealth declared National Property	...				Dec. 2

Second Period (the making of a New Constitution).

This work occupied the Assembly from August 1789 to September 1791. It included a complete reorganization of State and Church. There was much rioting, especially after ecclesiastical changes in the autumn of 1790.

1791.

Death of Mirabeau	...	...	...	...	April 2
Flight of Royal Family to Varennes	...	...			June 20
The Declaration of Pilnitz	...	...	...		August 27
Louis accepts Constitution of 1791	...	...	...		Sept. 18

B.—THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (1791—1792).

During this period the Constitution of 1791 was in force.

1791 (*continued*).

The Legislative Assembly meets	...	...		Oct. 1
Decrees against Emigrants and Dissidents			...	November (and onwards)
Narbonne, Minister of War	...	...	...	Dec. 7

1792.

Austro-Prussian Alliance	...	...	...	Feb. 7
Girondists in Ministry (Roland, Dumouriez, &c.)				March 28
France declares war with Austria	...	...		April 20
(Prussia declares war with France.)				

Failure of invasion of Belgium	...	...	Apr. 28, &c.
Girondist Ministers dismissed	...	...	June 13
Paris Mob breaks into Tuilleries	...	...	June 20
Brunswick's Manifesto	...	...	July 25
German armies invade France	...	...	July 26
Commune organizes attack on Tuilleries	...	...	August 9
Suspension of King. Convention to be elected	...	...	August 10
Prussians take Longwy	...	...	August 24
Massacre of Paris prisoners	...	...	Sept. 2, &c.
Dumouriez in Argonne Passes	...	...	Aug. 29 to Sept. 14
Prussians repulsed at Valmy	...	...	Sept. 20
(Retreat of Invaders.)			

C.—THE NATIONAL CONVENTION (1792—1795).

First Period (Struggles of Girondists and Jacobins).

DOMESTIC.

MILITARY.

1792 (*continued*).

France a Republic	Sept. 22	Dumouriez invades Belgium	Oct.
Trial of Louis	Dec. 11—14	Conquest of Belgium	Nov. & Dec.

1793.

Execution of Louis	Jan. 21	War with England	Feb. 1
Revolutionary Tribunal	Mar. 9	(Spain, Portugal, Holland, &c., join Coalition.)	
Revolt in La Vendée	March	Dumouriez invades Holland	Feb.
First Public Safety Committee	April 6	Defeat of French by Coburg	Mar. 1
Mob risings against Girondists	May 29—June 2	Dumouriez defeated at Neerwinden	Mar. 18
Girondists under arrest	June—Oct.	Dumouriez deserts	Apr. 3
Revolt of Departments	July	(French evacuate Belgium.)	
Marat assassinated	July 13	Allies take Mainz and Valenciennes	July 8
General Levy decreed	Aug. 23		

Second Period (Jacobin Triumphs).

In August 1792, the invaders were pressing forwards from the Netherlands, Germany, Piedmont and Spain. The English were blockading French ports. Many parts of France were in Revolt against the Convention.

DOMESTIC.

MILITARY.

1793 (*continued*).

Maximum Law . . .	Sept. 17	Houcharde victorious at	
Law against Suspects . .	Sept. 17	Hondschoote	Sept. 8
Ex-queen guillotined . .	Oct. 9	Lyons yields	Oct. 9
Girondists guillotined . .	Oct. 31	Jourdan victorious at Wat-	
Reign of Terror . . .	Nov. &c.	tignes	Oct. 16
Feasts of Reason begin .	Nov. 10	Vendéans routed . . .	Dec. 12
Atrocities at Nantes . .	Dec.	Toulon yields	Dec. 19

Third Period (Triumph and Fall of Robespierre).

1794.

Execution of Hébertists	Mar. 25	Pichegru victorious at Tur-	
Execution of Dantonists	Apr. 3, 5	coign	Apr. 28
Feast of Supreme Being	June 8	English naval victory . .	June 1
Robespierre executed . .	July 28		

*Fourth Period (Triumph of Republican Individualists).*1794 (*continued*).

Jacobin Club closed . .	Nov. 12	French reconquer Belgium	July &c.
Repeal of Maximum . .	Dec. 24		

1795.

Socialist risings suppressed		French invade Holland .	January
April and May		Peace with Prussia . .	April 5
Royalist rising suppressed	Oct.	Peace with Holland . .	May 15
New Legislature meets .	Oct. 26	Peace with Spain . . .	July 12
		Failure of Quiberon Ex-	
		pedition	July 21

EPILOGUE.

The Directory	...	...	...	...	1795—1799
Consulate of Buonaparte, Siéyès and Ducos	...				1799
Buonaparte, First Consul	...	...	...	...	1800
Napoleon, Emperor (by Plebiscite)	...				1804—1814
Bourbon Legitimate Monarchy	...	...			1815—1830
Orleanist Reformed Monarchy			1830—1848
Second Republic	1848—1852
Second Empire	1852—1870
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